

From Citizen to Non-Existent

A Study of Bahrain's Politics of Citizenship

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From Citizen to Non-Existent

When a Bahraini has his citizenship revoked, he has no right in life. When you make him stateless, you have ripped him from his roots. You made no existence for him in the country he is in. It is like you have executed him civilly. It is a civil execution.

– Author interview with a Bahraini whose citizenship has been revoked
by the authorities in Bahrain.

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Abstract

In 2011, Bahrain was one of the Arab countries which were affected by mass-scale protests. Since then, the public dissatisfaction with the political system, which was the underlying cause for the eruption of the Bahraini uprising, has not been alleviated. Instead, the relationship between the ruler and the ruled has deteriorated on several accounts.

This thesis examines the relationship between the state and the citizens in Bahrain. It addresses the authorities' politics of citizenship; that is, how they regulate the state-citizen relationship. The situation in five arenas is described. These arenas are related to (1) education, (2) employment, (3) religious freedom and cultural rights, (4) access to citizenship and, to a lesser extent, (5) access to political participation.

Particular attention is paid to how the public policies result in differentiated citizenship, in which different citizen statuses are attached to different groups in society. The thesis addresses the sectarian nature of these policies. Notwithstanding that all political opponents are targeted, members of the Shia population are particularly subjected to marginalization and degradation by the authorities.

Concerning access to citizenship, the thesis assesses the politics of citizenship revocations in Bahrain, in which members of the political community are deprived of their citizenship. Citizenship revocations have been increasingly issued after the eruption of the popular uprising in 2011. In this way, the politics of citizenship in Bahrain are at worst resulting in citizens becoming non-existent within the state system.

Preface

It has been a joyful journey to dig into a country which I have followed for several years, in particular since the 2011-uprising. However, the situation in Bahrain is unfortunately not promising in the near future. I hope this thesis contributes to shed light on what is going on in this tiny island in the Middle East. My knowledge about Bahrain increased throughout the writing of this thesis, and I hope others would sit with the same feeling after reading it.

When this thesis now has been completed, I would like to express my gratitude to a number of people for their help and support.

Thanks to my parents for their endless support in every aspect of life, including in the months I was busy writing this thesis. Thanks also to other relatives, in particular my lovely siblings and grandparents.

A special thanks goes to my supervisor, professor Nils Butenschøn. He has been helpful from the first email I sent him in September until the last phase of this thesis in May. I am honoured to have had Butenschøn, who is an expert in both citizenship and Middle East, as my supervisor. His comments have contributed to improve this thesis.

Thanks to members of Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) and Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) who provided me with data. Their work is highly appreciated. Thanks also to the interviewees who provided me with valuable information and insight into the situation in Bahrain.

I would also like to thank Maarten Danckaert, affiliated junior researcher at the Leuven Institute for Human Rights and Critical Studies in Belgium, for recommending literature on Bahrain and reviewing my thesis.

Thanks to Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) for the office space where most of this thesis was written. In particular, thanks to researcher Marianne Millstein for useful comments on the thesis. I am glad to have been part of the research community at NIBR. It motivated me to continue working with research after graduation.

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Map of Bahrain



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Acronyms

ADHRB	Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain
BCHR	Bahrain Center for Human Rights
BICI	Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry
BIRD	Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy
BNA	Bahrain News Agency
ECDHR	European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
HRW	Human Rights Watch
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USCIRF	United States Commission on International Religious Freedom
NGO	Non-governmental organisation

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Arab Uprisings – The Case of Bahrain

In 2011, Arab leaders were challenged by masses of people who protested against the policies of the state. The citizens were discontent with the existing regimes. They were disappointed in how the rulers governed. Inequality, injustice and authoritarianism characterized the governance of the Arab leaders. The masses demanded a brighter future for themselves and the coming generations. They demanded a change of policies and, sometimes, the fall of the oppressive regime. They wished to replace oppression with equality, abuses with respect for human rights, and autocracy with democracy. The citizens wanted a greater role in political decision-making. The uneven relationship between the state and the citizens was to change if the protestors had their say.

Inspired by the protestors in Tunisia and Egypt, the people of Bahrain took to the street on 14 February 2011. More than a quarter or 1/3 of the approximately 600,000' citizenry joined the protests (Bassiouni et.al. 2011: 88; IFEX 2011). Bahrain's rulers were the only among the Gulf countries who became seriously challenged by the Arab Uprisings. Perhaps they faced the most popular uprising in the Arab world when seen relatively to the country's small population. Great dissatisfaction with the ruling elite had existed for a long time in the tiny country. This was reflected in multiple protests and petitions by the citizenry throughout Bahrain's history in order to end their absence from political life. The rulers' failure to satisfy these demands contributed to the eruption of the "Arab Spring"-inspired uprising in 2011.

The 14 February uprising erupted with calls for people's right to self-determination. However, the demands expressed by protestors were not solely political. The demands were also of social, economic and cultural kind. People demanded equal citizenship in face of systematic discrimination in several spheres in the society. In particular, the majority population consisting of Shia Muslims has for a long time been subjected to discrimination. The uprising represented an opportunity to change the current citizenship regime and change the living conditions of citizens. The Arab uprisings have been called "critical junctures," because radical changes could result from the eruption of masses calling for their rights (Butenschön

2015: 112-113). However, the changes took different directions in each country. In Bahrain, the conditions for citizens have arguably deteriorated.

1.2 Research Focus

This thesis seeks to address the current situation for citizens in Bahrain. It aims to describe the authorities' politics of citizenship. Citizenship concerns people's membership in the political community which make up the state. Widely defined, it deals with the ruler's relationship with the ruled (Butenschøn 2000: 4). Bahraini authorities have arguably different relationships with different groups of citizens depending on their sectarian and political affiliations. Some citizens enjoy more favourable conditions than others. The result is differentiated citizenship, in which the status of some members in the state is more privileged than others. This thesis therefore examines the following research question:

In what ways and to what extent do the politics of citizenship lead to differentiated citizenship in Bahrain?

Furthermore, this thesis pays particular attention to how the authorities regulate people's access to citizenship as a way of differentiation. Here, the examination is based on the increased use of citizenship revocation by the authorities. Since 2012, an increased number of citizenship revocations have taken place. In this way, people are deprived of the fundamental right of being considered a citizen or a member of the state. The case of citizenship revocation is used to shed light on how the authorities define citizenship according to several dimensions. The second research question is therefore:

In particular, how do the politics of citizenship revocations illustrate the authorities' concept of citizenship in terms of extent, content, and depth of citizenship?

While differentiated citizenship has truly existed in Bahrain for a long time, this thesis seeks to describe its current presence with an emphasis on the developments in the last years. Since the eruption of the 14 February uprising in 2011, measures have been employed to contain those who challenge the ruler's power or who are believed to constitute such a threat. The

mechanism of citizenship revocation is perhaps one example of that, as this thesis describes. The authorities' categorizing of people appears to be motivated by sectarianism. In fact, observers note that sectarianism is on the rise since the 2011-uprising (Diwan 2013: 143; Matthiesen 2013: 20). Therefore, particular attention is paid to the sectarian nature of the politics of citizenship in Bahrain.

1.3 Objective

The objective of this thesis is to make a contribution to the academic literature on Bahrain. Although this tiny country had one of the most popular uprisings in the region during the so-called "Arab Spring" in 2011, relatively little attention has been paid to the underlying causes of people's dissatisfaction with the current regime. The sectarian politics of the state is often mentioned. However, a more detailed account on the different expressions of sectarianism and its consequences is needed. By focusing on sectarian-based differentiated citizenship, this thesis demonstrates in what ways discriminatory policies are taking place and how they tend to be motivated by sectarianism.

Thus, this thesis has an exploratory purpose. It seeks to describe central features in the Bahraini society. For example, it addresses the conditions in the fields of education and employment. Furthermore, it makes particularly a contribution to the available information about the authorities' use of citizenship revocations. The latter has received almost no attention in the existing academic literature on Bahrain. This is partly due to its recent character, as revocations have been issued most extensively since 2012. In less than five years (as of April 2017), the authorities have denaturalised more than 400 Bahrainis. They are now "non-citizens" in their own home country. By an examination of the dimensions of extent, content, and depth of citizenship, this phenomenon is addressed. It addresses – among other questions – who are excluded from membership in the Bahraini state, why they are excluded, and what they are excluded from.

Furthermore, the assessment of the authorities' politics of citizenship revocations contributes to the general literature on statelessness. Most of those whose Bahraini citizenship have been revoked end up stateless, i.e. not considered as citizens in any country in the world. There

needs more research on the causes and consequences of statelessness, as scholars within this field emphasize (Blitz and Lynch 2011: 4). The examination of the second research question in this thesis produces inputs to this field. In fact, the title of this thesis – ‘From Citizen to Non-Existent’ – is inspired by a consequence of statelessness. ‘Non-Existent’ is a description used on individuals who are stateless and consequently paperless and thus non-existing within the state system.

1.4 The Bahraini Conflict

In order to understand the long-running conflict between the ruler and the ruled in Bahrain, a brief description of this conflict is presented in this introductory chapter. In 1783, the Al-Khalifa conquered Bahrain. The country has since then been governed by this clan. For almost 100 years, they governed with British help, as Bahrain was a protectorate of the United Kingdom. People expressed dissatisfaction with the political system both prior to and after the independence from the UK in 1971. Activist groups, many of whom were cross-sectarian, demanded greater access to political decision-making (Kinninmont 2011: 33-39). There have been governmental attempts to meet such demands, but the failure of these has deepened the public mistrust of the leadership. An account of these failed attempts after independence is introduced in this section in order to shed light on the ruler-ruled conflict, which continues to our days.

Bahrain got its first constitution in 1973. The same year, the country had its first general election and an elected national assembly was established. However, the parliament functioned only two years. In 1975, the emir dissolved the parliament when it emerged as a capable institution to block governmental bills such as the State Security Law of 1974. The emir also imposed a state of emergency, which lasted to 2002. There were continuous calls from the citizenry to reinstall the parliament and to end the emergency laws. In the 1990s, an *intifada* erupted against the government and its abuses against political opponents, including arbitrary arrests and torture in custody (Moore-Gilbert 2016: 173-176).

A new era emerged when the current king Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa took over the throne after his father’s death in 1999. In 2001, he held a referendum to get people’s support “to

establish a democratically elected chamber in parliament and to establish an independent judiciary,” as the provision said (IFES). An overwhelming majority – official numbers say 98 % – supported the king’s promised reforms which would include people in political decision-making. The optimism was high (Meijer and Danckaert 2015: 216; Kinninmont 2011: 42-43). Villages which in the 1990s had taken part in the intifada against the king’s father, were now welcoming the new king. For example, in Sitrah, an area known for its oppositional activity, jubilant crowds welcomed the new king when he visited them in 2001 (Kinninmont 2012: 17). The referendum, in which people had supported institutional changes, resulted in a new constitution in 2002.

However, what the people had supported and expected of the new king, was not the same as what they got. A large part of the king’s promises of reform were never implemented. For example, the king had promised to set up a parliament which was to consist of a 40-members chamber elected by popular elections and another 40-member consultative chamber appointed by the king. Only the former was to have legislative power, but in the 2002 constitution the two chambers of parliament are both granted legislative powers. Moreover, the constitution gives the king the authority to veto any legislative decision. Although the constitution states the principle of separation of powers, it also declares that the king appoints the members of the cabinet and the judges. Thus, although the constitution reinstalled the parliament and reintroduced general elections, the partly elected legislature did not give people real access to the political decision-making process. The supreme powers remain in the hands of the ruler and the royal family who occupies most high-ranking positions in the state (Gengler 2013: 55).

Notwithstanding its failure to meet people’s expectations, the 2002 constitution embodies fundamental principles of human rights, such as the principle of equality between citizens without discrimination. However, such constitutional rights and principles are often violated, as the examination of the research questions in this thesis will illustrate. One instance in which discrimination occurs, is precisely in people’s access to political participation. In practice, Shia citizens as a group are excluded the most from the political decision-making process. Although they constitute the majority, estimations say up to 70 % of the citizenry, they are underrepresented in the government and the parliament. Electoral gerrymandering has resulted in the fact that a vote from a Sunni-dominated district can count up to 21 times

more than a vote from a Shia-dominated district. In this way, even though Shia political societies participated in the 2006 and 2010 elections and were elected by most voters, they ended up with a minority of deputies (ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2015a: 16-19; Siperco 2010).

Therefore, many people perceive the outcome of the 2000s reform project as a betrayal of their trust in the new king (Kinninmont 2012: 17). Bahrain became a “constitutional autocracy,” as some name the current political system (Rose 2009: 17). The authorities continue to repress political opponents. The perception of betrayal contributed to the continuation and perhaps extension of public dissatisfaction over the years. In fact, the popular Arab uprising in Bahrain erupted exactly ten years after the referendum, which was to transit Bahrain into a democracy, was held on 14 February 2001. However, after only one month with mass-protests in the Pearl Roundabout in the capital Manama in 2011, the government – supported by troops from the Gulf Cooperation Council, mainly from Saudi Arabia and the Emirates – began a harsh crackdown on protestors.¹ Freedom House describes the current situation as follows: “Once a promising model for political reform and democratic transition, Bahrain has become one of the Middle East’s most repressive states” (Freedom House 2017).

1.5 Outline

The foregoing introduced background information on the dispute between the state authorities and a large part of the citizenry. This chapter furthermore addressed the research focus in this thesis, which is Bahrain’s politics of citizenship and, more concrete, differentiated citizenship. The next chapter presents the methods employed to answer the research questions. The analyses in this thesis are based on two sources of data: interviews and documents. Each of these is described in more detail in chapter 2, which also discusses validity and reliability. Chapter 3 addresses the theoretical approach of the study. The chapter gives an account of the citizenship approach, the advantages of it, its analytical tools – including the dimensions of extent, content, and depth of citizenship – and how it is employed to study Bahrain.

¹ Pearl Roundabout is Bahrain’s version of the Tahrir Square in Kairo, Egypt. On 16 March 2011, the military

The empirical analyses are found in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 deals with the first research question. It assesses the ways differentiated citizenship is present by focusing on the state's policies in the education system, in the job market, and issues related to religious freedom and cultural rights. Furthermore, it assesses to which *extent* differentiated citizenship is present when seen relatively to the situation pre the 2011-uprising. Chapter 5 answers the second research question. It addresses the phenomenon of citizenship revocations according to the three dimensions of extent, content, and depth of citizenship. The analysis identifies how the politics of citizenship revocations characterize the authorities' concept of citizenship.

The last chapter, chapter 6, sums up the study of Bahrain's politics of citizenship based on the empirical material provided in chapters 4 and 5. It gives a summary of the stance of differentiated citizenship in Bahrain. Thereafter it provides some theoretical considerations on the authorities' concept of citizenship, the rationales behind their policies and the expression of authoritarianism in Bahrain. It concludes by showing the serious consequences of Bahrain's politics of citizenship, in particular for persons who the authorities for one reason or another want to exclude from membership in the Bahraini political community, striking them from being citizens to non-existents.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

This study of Bahrain's politics of citizenship is based on two main sources of data: interviews and documents. The interview material derives from interviews made with Bahraini activists whose citizenship have been revoked by the Bahraini state during the last few years and who now live in exile. The documentary material derives from a wide range of documents, including (1) academic papers and books on Bahrain, (2) Bahraini laws, (3) official documents by Bahraini authorities, (4) UN documents, (5) reports by NGOs, and (6) mass-media outputs. In what follows, each of these sources are described. Thereafter, there is a discussion of the validity and reliability of the source material.

2.2 Interviews

I conducted interviews to obtain first-hand accounts of the phenomena of differentiated citizenship and citizenship revocation. The interviews were made with Bahraini activists whose Bahraini citizenship had been revoked by the authorities. The interviewees were selected, firstly, based on their activism. Although those I interviewed live in exile, they continue to speak out about the situation in Bahrain, for example by writing op-eds and participating in forums and NGOs. Based on their continued engagement for the Bahraini cause, the respondents have particular knowledge about the situation in Bahrain, which they gave me insight into. Secondly, it was desirable that the interviewees had lived in Bahrain not long time ago – that is, the time just before 2011 (most of them had to flee the country right after the uprising in fear of reprisal for their activism). In this way, they could provide personal stories about their own recent experience as a citizen in Bahrain, for example, about incidents of discrimination in the Bahraini society. All the respondents lived in Bahrain until 2011 except for one (Khalaf, see page 11) who lived in exile prior to that time.² Thirdly, while they all can be called activists, it was desirable that they had different professional

² The interview material from the latter respondent is therefore only used to shed light on the issue of citizenship revocations in chapter 5, and not in chapter 4 which contain respondents' stories about discrimination.

backgrounds. One is predominantly known as a human rights defender, while the others are better known as a blogger, a doctor and an academic, respectively.³ In this way, I wished to get stories from different angles based on their respective backgrounds. Lastly, the interviewees were selected based on the fact that they had their Bahraini citizenship revoked. The latter provided me with insight into their thoughts and experiences related to the incident of citizenship revocation.

Based on the criteria above, I interviewed four individuals.⁴ I got in touch with them through (1) personal contacts and (2) contact information that was available online. The resulting interview material is rich, and is used extensively as part of the empirical analyses in this thesis. It provides significant inputs to the analyses. Representativeness was not a goal of the sampling. The interviewees were key informants, who were selected based on their specialist knowledge about Bahrain. They have the depth knowledge about Bahrain, which could fulfil my aim in getting information about Bahrain's politics of differentiated citizenship and citizenship revocation. At the same time, the respondents provided information that is capable of shedding light on other cases which are reported in documentary sources. Thus, in many ways, the interviewees' stories represented a case among multiple similar cases, as we shall see in chapters 4 and 5. However, the respondents also represent special cases because they are politically active and thus believably more subjected to harassment by the state than an ordinary Bahraini citizen. The interview material is therefore often used to supplement the empirical material derived from documents to present illustrations of the situation in Bahrain.

The interviews were semi-structured. That entails that I had prepared some specific questions and topics that I wanted the interviewees to speak about. In this way, I made sure I got the information I wanted and needed from the respondents. The questions were open-ended, which meant that the interviewees defined the answers with their own words without being restricted by predefined answer choices. The information I got was thus based on what the respondents determined was important to tell. In addition, I made sure I had formulated the questions in a way that reduced the possibility of reactive effects, i.e. that the interviewees'

³ This description could be somewhat misleading as they are all defenders of human rights through their activism. However, my point with this criterion was to select respondents that are first and foremost known by dissimilar occupations.

⁴ I tried to contact a couple more individuals in exile to interview them, but I did not succeed in that. Later, I realised that I could have been less strict with the criteria, especially the one related to professional background; for example, I might have been able to contact more known human rights defenders for interview.

answers were influenced by the way I asked the questions. I therefore made sure that the questions were neither leading nor loaded so that they could not direct the answers of the respondents (Mosley 2013: 1-28; Bryman 2016: 466-495).

The interviews were conducted over Skype except for one, which was conducted by email. In the latter case, the respondent (Khalaf, see page 11) had written several papers, which he sent me, which covered many of the questions I had prepared for the interviews. The questions which were not covered in the papers, were corresponded by email. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted in English except from one (with Al-Aradi, see page 11), which was conducted in Arabic. All the interviews took place in February 2017.

2.2.1 The Interviewees

The interviewees consented to be identified by name in this thesis. Their identification is advantageous as they give the interview material a personal character. The interviewees are:

Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei is a Bahraini human rights defender. He is director of advocacy for the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), a NGO based in the UK. During the 2011-uprising in Bahrain, while he participated in the protests in the Pearl Roundabout, he was interviewed by international media outlets.⁵ As part of the crackdown on protestors, Alwadaei was arrested in March 2011 and sentenced to six months' imprisonment by a military court. After his release, he fled the country and sought asylum in the UK in 2012, where he later founded BIRD. In January 2015, Bahraini authorities revoked his Bahraini citizenship. He can be followed at *twitter.com/salwadaei*.

Ali Abdulemam is a Bahraini blogger. In 1999, he founded 'Bahrain Online,' which is considered to be the country's first free online forum for political and social debate. As he had been subjected to arrests earlier, he went into hiding in March 2011 when he witnessed the arrest campaign on dissidents. In June 2011, he was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment *in*

⁵ See Al-Jazeera: "People & Power - Bahrain: Fighting for change." Published on 9 March 2011 [https://youtu.be/IZdyiK-Z5Do].

absentia with a group of others for the accusation of “plotting a coup” during the uprising.⁶ After two years in hiding, he managed to escape from Bahrain. Right after, in May 2013, he attended Oslo Freedom Forum, where he was expected to speak already in 2011, had it not been for his disappearance. Today, he is exiled in the UK. He is a member of a NGO named Bahrain Watch. In January 2015, his Bahraini citizenship was revoked. He can be followed at twitter.com/abdulemam.

Ebrahim Al-Aradi is a Bahraini doctor. He worked in Salmaniya Medical Complex, Bahrain’s largest hospital. During the 2011-uprising, he treated protestors and appeared on television channels speaking about the crackdown he was witness to. He participated in protests himself, including against the minister of health to demand his resignation after ambulances were denied to go and treat protesters at the Pearl Roundabout. In March 2011, his name and picture were published in Bahrain National TV as part of their campaign to expose those who had participated in the protests. Out of fear of arrest, he immediately fled the country. He lives today in Lebanon, where he continues to engage in the situation in Bahrain, including by speaking to Arabic media channels about the situation. In January 2015, Bahraini authorities revoked his Bahraini citizenship. He can be followed at twitter.com/ebrahim_alaradi.

Abdulhadi Khalaf is a senior Bahraini ex-parliamentarian and academic. In 1973, he was elected to the Bahraini parliament as a representative for the leftist block. When the emir dissolved the parliament in 1975, he was subjected to several arrests. He immigrated to Sweden, where he has worked as a professor of sociology in Lund University since 1990. He has written multiple research papers and books on Bahrain and the Gulf region. He also writes to newspapers on the same issues. In November 2012, he was among the first group to be revoked the Bahraini citizenship since the outbreak of the uprising in 2011. He can be followed at twitter.com/abdulhadikhalaf.

⁶Amnesty called the trial 'patently unfair' [<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/bahrain-trial-shia-activists-was-patently-unfair>].

2.3 Documents

Documents are my second source of data. A wide range of documents is employed, including (1) academic papers and books on Bahrain, (2) Bahraini laws, (3) official documents by Bahraini authorities, (4) UN documents, (5) reports by NGOs, and (6) mass-media outputs. There are many documents available in this regard, both in English and Arabic. These are predominantly available online, except from academic books which I either borrowed from my university library or purchased from bookstores from abroad. There are some specific challenges related to the use of documents which are produced for non-academic purposes, including number 2 to 6 above. I was conscious to assess their credibility and authenticity before employing them in this thesis, as discussed in section 2.4 under validity and reliability.

Documents are used as sources as they can be interesting in themselves, such as number 2 and 3 which are primary sources to assess the policies by the Bahraini state. Moreover, documents contain a great amount of empirical data, including those by the UN, NGOs and mass-media. Such documents also contain up-to-date information, as they often report what is going on in the country to any time. The latter is necessary to be able to give an account of the current situation in Bahrain after the 2011-uprising. Furthermore, these documents are greater in quantity than those produced by researchers and academics. There are relatively few academic writings on Bahrain compared with other Arab countries which were affected by an uprising during the spring of 2011. This can be due to the fact that Bahrain is relatively small, both in area and population, and other countries such as Egypt and Syria are believed to have more crucial roles in the region and thus be more worthy of research attention. Bahrain is however interesting in its own way, as described in the introductory chapter. I therefore make use of the documents available ‘out there’ – after an assessment of their authenticity and credibility – to make a contribution to the literature on Bahrain.

Below is a short presentation of the different types of documents employed in this thesis:

(1) Academic papers and books on Bahrain: many of these concentrate on the sectarian nature of politics in Bahrain and perhaps other Gulf countries, but they also describe – to a greater or lesser extent – other features in the Bahrain society. Examples are: Gengler (2013 and 2015), Kinninmont (2012), Moore-Gilbert (2016), Meijer and Danckaert (2015), Matthiesen (2013), Wehrey (2013), Potter (2013, eds.) and Louër (2012).

(2) Bahraini laws: the constitution of 2002 is of particular interest. Other laws of relevance are the Citizenship Act of 1963 and the Law of Protecting Society from Terrorist Acts of 2006.

(3) Documents by Bahraini authorities: this includes policy documents and statements made in relation with decrees, such as the decrees on citizenship revocation. These are often published on the website to the state-owned Bahrain News Agency (BNA).

(4) UN documents: this includes reports and statements made by UN Special Rapporteurs, in addition to Bahrain's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) reports, in particular that of 2012.

(5) Reports by NGOs: including by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW). Empirical material derived from reports by Bahrain-centred NGOs makes a significant contributor to this thesis. These NGOs are: Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR). These three NGOs often publish joint reports. One noteworthy example is the more than 200-pages report "Bahrain's Third Cycle UPR: A Record of Repression" published in March 2017, which contains a comprehensive assessment of Bahrain's implementation of the 2012 UPR recommendations.⁷

(6) Mass-media outputs: predominantly articles by the state-owned Bahrain News Agency (BNA) and the independent Bahraini daily newspaper Alwasat. To a lesser extent, textual material derives also from established international news channels, and from the independent Bahraini electronic newspaper, Bahrain Mirror.

2.4 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are central concepts in an assessment of the quality of sources employed in research. Validity concerns "the approximate truth of an inference" (Shadish, Cook and Campbell 2002: 34). For example, it involves an evaluation of the credibility of the

⁷ This report is cited in this thesis as ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2017.

sources used to claim the existence of differentiated citizenship in Bahrain. Reliability refers to the trustworthiness of results; it is specifically concerned with whether they are accurate and consistent (Bryman 2016: 156-157). For example, it deals with the accuracy of the described account of how politics of citizenship lead to differentiated citizenship. There are different ways of assessing validity and reliability in qualitative research compared to quantitative research. In this qualitative study, validity and reliability refer to almost the same thing; that is, the integrity of conclusions. They are therefore used interchangeably here.

A main challenge is related to the use of ordinary documents made for non-academic purposes, such as newspapers, NGO reports and official documents derived from the state. These are not subjected to the same validity and reliability concerns as set forth in, often peer-reviewed, scientific research. However, authors of texts with non-academic purposes also want their works to sound valid and reliable for the readers. Notwithstanding, these works have to be evaluated according to scientific criteria to determine whether they can be used as evidence in an academic paper. Scott (1990) has presented useful criteria in this regard, including the criteria of authenticity and credibility. They concern whether we know who has or have produced the document and whether we can trust what the author(s) write(s). Considerations of this kind have been fundamental in the process of selecting documents for my analyses.

Firstly, Bahraini law and official documents by the authorities are authentic as it is clear who has produced them. They are credible in the sense of being the actual legal and political framework of the state, and – in many times – containing the authorities' point of view and a legitimization or justification of their policies. However, the official documents can contain information which is not necessary true, for example a claim of equality between citizens. Such claims are precisely subjected to discussion in this thesis, and are therefore themselves interesting. The content in such documents is compared with what other sources report.

Secondly, documents are selected from established NGOs, which are well-known for their authenticity and credibility. It includes Amnesty and HRW, as well as the internationally rewarded BCHR. The latter was established in Bahrain in 2002 and has today office in Copenhagen, although a large part of the staff continues to operate from Bahrain. BCHR has been awarded several international prizes, including the 2012 Index on Censorship Advocacy

Award and the 2013 Rafto Prize. BCHR cooperates closely with ADHRB and BIRD, including by working on joint reports. ADHRB has also been established for a long time in the US, initially in 2002, and is like BCHR a member of IFEX Global Network for Defending and Promoting Free Expression. BIRD is a NGO registered in the UK. It was founded in 2013 by Bahraini exiles, including Alwadaei who I interviewed. All these NGOs, from Amnesty to BIRD, are organisations that are heavily trusted and considered to be credible. They engage with international bodies such as the UN. These NGOs base their reports on a high standard of documentation, including by monitoring specific cases and interviewing victims of abuses by the state. Documents by the UN and their Special Rapporteurs are also subjected to the same standards, and thus considered to be authentic and credible.

Lastly, regarding mass media, I have used outputs from well-known and established newspapers and news agencies. The most-employed source in this regard, is Alwasat newspaper. This newspaper was founded in 2002 and is considered as independent from the state. Alwasat was honoured for its credibility in 2012 when the London-based Next Century Foundation ranged it at the top of the “Media Credibility Index.” However, if the media outputs mentioned governmental sources, I tried to find the primary source to interpret it myself rather than relying on others’ comments on it. Furthermore, I tried to find several documentary sources which report the same issue or news in order to cross-check the ‘facts’ presented in a document. I had the academic literature and information from the interviews to rely on to help me with the task of cross-checking. This is the advantage of triangulation, the use of more than one method or source of data in the study of a social phenomenon. It can increase the likelihood of valid and reliable research findings (Bryman 2016: 386). Thus, although there are some problems linked to documents produced with non-academic purposes, I made sure to only use the sources which, after an assessment, appeared as authentic and credible.

Regarding interviews, I took some measures to minimize the possibility of errors such as the occurrence of reactive effects. This included reflections on the formulation of questions, for example to prevent loaded or leading questions, as noted above. Another relevant concern is linked to the language used in the interviews. I spoke English with most of the interviewees, so the quotations from these interviews are word-for-word. However, one of the interviews (with Al-Aradi, see page 11) was conducted in Arabic. This interview was transcribed in

English based on my own translation. As with every translation, it can include interpretation of the information presented. The translator may interpret what is said so his or her specific understanding of the information influences the translation. However, this is an issue I was aware of from the start. Therefore, I tried to be as accurate as possible when translating and transcribing. The fact that I recorded the interviews made this process easier. The language issue should therefore not have an impact on the truthfulness of the quotations derived from any of the interviews, which are presented in chapters 4 and 5.

3 THEORETICAL APPROACH

This chapter presents the theoretical approach adopted to study Bahrain's politics of citizenship. The aim is to show the significance of citizenship as an approach to study social and political conditions in a country such as Bahrain. Firstly, the chapter gives an account of the notion of citizenship and the theoretical approach to it. Secondly, it presents relevant inputs from the associated contract theory. Thirdly, the advantages of the approach as well as its criticism are discussed. Fourthly follows a description of the analytical framework derived from the citizenship approach. Here, concepts central to the objective of this thesis, namely the 'politics of citizenship' and 'differentiated citizenship,' are presented. In addition, there is a presentation of the dimensions of extent, content and depth of citizenship, which are analytical tools in the study of citizenship. Lastly, the chapter describes how the citizenship approach is applied to study Bahrain.

3.1 The Citizenship Approach

Citizenship concerns the relationship between the state and the inhabitants under its jurisdiction. The state is represented by the government, those with authority to govern a territory. They have a monopoly on the use of power, e.g., through the police and military. The inhabitants constitute the members of the political community who are subject to governance by the state. They are the citizens who are affected by government policies, but who also are able to affect – to a greater or lesser extent – the policies. The relationship between these two groups of actors, the rulers and the ruled, is the level of analysis adopted by the citizenship approach (Butenschøn 2000: 4). The approach examines central features in this relationship, including the rights and duties of each party.

There are several approaches to citizenship, each taking its inspiration from different disciplines. The study of Bahrain in this thesis employs a political science approach to citizenship, which is concerned specifically on how the state-citizen relationship is constituted so citizenship becomes a mechanism of power distribution. Although efforts made by citizens to influence or change the existing citizenship regime are mentioned, the thesis is mainly

concerned with a top-down approach in which state authorities play the crucial role in forming the relationship with citizens.

The relationship between the state and the citizens is conceptualized as contractual. Scholars adopting this approach assume that there is a social contract between individuals living in a territory and those governing the state. This assumption is central in contract theory, which is described further below. The social contract is supposed to regulate the relationship and clarify the role of each party. Each actor gives and gets in one way or another: each has duties and obligations, but also rights and privileges (Faulks 2000: 4-5). For instance, a classic example is that citizens get free social services such as education and health care in exchange for paying taxes, or – as we shall see is the case in authoritarian states such as Bahrain – in exchange of obedience and loyalty to the ruler. This principle of ‘give and get’ forms the basis of the social contract. It regulates social life, how people live together in a society, and what expectations they have towards each other.

Today, the social contract is to a large extent embodied in different written documents, such as the constitution, national and international legislation. The social contract, however, also comes in non-written forms such as norms, practises and traditions, though these often are more challenging to approach than the forms available as documents (Isin and Turner 2002: 4-5). The social contract can be changed, and it is usually in constant change. For instance, taking the written forms of it, laws get constantly amended and new rules are introduced. The policies of rulers, embodied for example in official documents, are another important element to look for in the assessment of the content and dynamics of a social contract. Government policies play a crucial role in forming the conditions under which people live. These conditions are affected in case of change in policy discourse. The state’s activity of policymaking goes under the wider concept of ‘politics of citizenship’ (see section 3.4) and makes a central feature in citizenship studies, particularly within the field of political science (Meijer 2014: 628-631; Butenschøn 2000: 5-6).

The instruments controlled by the state such as the legislative and executive branches, as well as the judicial branch in authoritarian states, give state actors strong cards in defining the contractual relationship between them and the citizens. A study of these instruments gives a top-down approach to citizenship, which – as mentioned – is at core in this thesis, although

efforts made by citizens to influence or change the existing citizenship regime are also mentioned. The latter represents a bottom-up approach to citizenship. It is important to mention such efforts by citizens to not portray them as passive and overran by the state. Inputs from the bottom-up approach are therefore included in order to show how citizens engage in challenging the way state authorities have defined the conditions of citizenship. In this regard, the material from the interviewees can contain such inputs from a bottom-up approach.

3.2 Contract Theory

Contract theory within the field of political theory or political philosophy is closely associated with the idea that states are built on the social contract. Contract theorists such as Thomas Hobbes argue that the social contract prevents an anarchical situation where everyone has to compete and fight over the available resources in a territory in order to survive. Individuals would instead come together and agree on a contract in order to escape this anarchical ‘state of nature,’ which is characterized by conflict, envy and misery (Wolff 2006: 8-17). The product is states, as we have in the world today, where the distribution of resources is regulated through the social contract and where governments control the distribution process. According to contract theory, we have states and thus citizenship because people come together and cooperate in order to live a life regulated by a social contract that they have – to a greater or lesser extent – agreed on.

A significant discussion within contract theory is centred on the question of who should rule and how to rule. What is the role of the state represented by the government? And to which extent can citizens influence the social contract? On the one hand, Hobbes argued that it is necessary to have a strong authoritarian ruler in order to prevent an anarchical situation. On the other hand, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau defended a democratic system where the government extracted its legitimacy to rule from the people. Locke stressed the need of separation of powers between a legislative, executive, and judicial branch, respectively, in which each branch is checked by the other two. The aim is to safeguard citizens from corruption of rulers through a representative democracy (Wolff 2006: 96-97). Rousseau preferred a direct democracy where citizens play an active role in political decision-making.

He argued that people's general will should rule and that this required active participation. The general will is the same as the interests people have in common, and the laws should therefore reflect this. The role of the government is simply to carry out the laws decided by the people (Wolff 2006: 78-80). Hobbes, in contrast, believed that the government should have absolute powers and enforce whatever laws it wishes. The state is neither restricted by citizens nor obliged to pay attention to their voices or even their liberties when it governs (Wolff 2006: 105).

The foregoing discussion signifies that there is a disagreement between contract theorists on the function of the state. This disagreement reflects the range of state types in the world today, e.g., from democracies with more or less active participation by citizens to authoritarian states. Contract theorists agree, however, on the point that people would choose to live in a state where social life is regulated through a contract rather than an anarchy characterized by conflict, envy and misery (Wolff 2006: 39-45). Citizenship is thus an almost unavoidable phenomenon, especially due to how the world is composed today. Disputes can though occur on the terms of the contractual relationship between the state and the citizens, as described above. It is important to know how a social contract is constituted in order to understand what type of regime we are dealing with, e.g., whether it is a Hobbesian or a Lockean type of state and whether citizens have the right and opportunity to influence state policies. In this way, contract theorists shed light on central features of citizenship, including the authority and legitimacy of rulers. How these features appear in the Bahraini context is discussed throughout the next chapters. In particular, the last chapter examines what the empirical analyses in chapters 4 and 5 signify about authoritarianism in Bahrain.

3.3 Advantages of the Citizenship Approach

The citizenship approach is an easily applicable approach, as the foregoing examination demonstrates. Firstly, it is uncontroversial. Its theoretical assumption is universal: it assumes the existence of a state with rulers and citizens, and a *de facto* and *de jure* relationship between these two. Secondly, its empirical focus is specific: it studies this contractual relationship between the rulers and the ruled (Butenschøn 2000: 16). Thirdly, there exist analytical tools to study this relationship. Faulks' (2000) dimensions of extent, content, and

depth of citizenship serve as an example (see section 3.4.1). Lastly, citizenship is a fundamental phenomenon in every modern state. Therefore, the approach should be applicable in all cases where we want to study the social and political relations in a state. For these reasons, I have adopted this approach in my in-depth study of Bahrain.

The citizenship approach gives valuable insights into how social and political life are arranged in a given society. From the viewpoint of particularly the political science discipline, the approach sheds light on the nature of politics and governance in a state, as well as its impact on citizens and their engagement in response to it. In this way, it uncovers the power dynamics in a state, revealing who has the power and ability to influence the extent, content, and depth of citizenship. Moreover, the approach asserts that the relationships under consideration, including power relations, are dynamic and changeable (Faulks 2000: 5-10). The changes can come incrementally or as a consequence of (unexpected) popular movements and revolutions. An example of the latter can be the Arab uprisings of 2011, which is relevant for my study of Bahrain. The uprisings opened for radical political changes in the involved Arab countries, although it did not necessarily lead to better conditions for citizens (Butenschøn 2015: 112). The approach stresses this crucial element of dynamics, which should be included in an analysis of citizenship.

Despite the advantages linked to the citizenship approach, some may criticize its application in non-democratic settings. The citizenship approach was developed, foremost, to analyse Western liberal democracies, and accordingly, one can believe, that its assumptions are based on that specific context. According to this view, citizenship requires that members of a political community enjoy the freedom to influence the social contract which citizenship is made of. For example, the state has to be represented by a government which has derived its authority and legitimacy to govern from the people. This is similar to what Locke and Rousseau argue in their contract theories. The critics may say that only in such democratic settings would it be fair to talk about a social contract and a resulting contractual relationship between two autonomous parties (Wolff 2006: 41-42).

However, I choose to adopt this approach despite the fact that Bahrain is an authoritarian state. Firstly, this is justified by the fact that the main assumption of the approach is universal – that is, the existence of a contractual relationship between a state and the inhabitants under

its jurisdiction. The existence of such a relationship is evident, among others, in Bahrain's 2002 constitution and other laws. Secondly, as Meijer and Butenschøn (2017: 4) argue when they introduce citizenship studies to the Middle Eastern region, "[c]itizenship studies has developed instruments to analyse politics and state-society relations wherever modern bureaucratic states that rule over a delineated territory have emerged." Such instruments are, for example, those developed by Faulks (2000). Faulks' dimensions are by no means only applicable to Western liberal democracies, as the description of these dimensions in section 3.4.1 shows. Furthermore, since the British administration of Bahrain and after independence, Bahrain has developed to become a bureaucratic state.

Lastly, I believe whether the citizens enjoy full freedoms and rights is precisely a subject of the study of citizenship rather than a prerequisite for the conduct of it. It is the task of the analyst to describe citizens' *struggle* for greater rights and influence. So, even though citizens in undemocratic societies cannot influence the social contract as much as citizens in democratic systems, there exists a de facto contractual relationship between the state and citizens in both these societies. This relationship is defined, among others, in laws, which restrict and regulate the behaviour of citizens as well as rulers (although they violate it). The study deals with the content of the social contract, and not whether a social contract exists at all, which is obvious that it does in Bahrain. Therefore, by assessing laws, official documents and so on, it is possible to study how citizenship is regulated and thus the politics of citizenship in Bahrain.

3.4 Towards an Analytical Framework: Politics of Citizenship

Political scientists have developed several concepts and measures in order to study citizenship. A central concept, which is important for the objective of this thesis, is 'politics of citizenship'. This does not just concern the activity of making policies, though the latter constitutes a significant element of it. As Nils A. Butenschon (2000: 6) writes,

“[t]he politics of citizenship, as an analytical category, covers more than citizenship *policies* – i.e., the legal and practical-political ways in which state authorities handle

questions of citizenship. It covers any arena of social interaction where citizenship comes into the picture as an mechanism of power distribution.”

Such arena of social interaction could be in times of political turbulence and conflict, for example during or after the occurrence of social movements. Authorities might in such circumstances change the conditions of citizenship in order to, e.g., weaken the oppositional movement. For example, they might ban associations or even deprive people of their citizenship. In this way, citizenship is used as a political tool in order to empower some actors over others, e.g., through giving benefits to some groups in society while excluding others.

Another central concept in this thesis is the concept of ‘differentiated citizenship.’ Differentiated citizenship is a specific outcome of the politics of citizenship, in which state benefits and accordingly power are distributed disproportionately between people. A differentially graded citizenship results from differentiation, in which some groups in society are granted particular benefits and rights, while others are excluded from them. In this way, the state’s relationship with different groups in the society is regulated by a social contract which differs from group to group. The state performs thus selective policies on certain groups, either to advantage them or disadvantage them (Meijer and Butenschøn 2017: 17). This can be based on the authorities’ view of who “deserves” benefits and who does not. Sometimes, particularly in authoritarian regimes, this selection is based on loyalty to rulers. Examples of such benefits are social goods such as housing and employment in the public sector. Consequently, in these societies some people are superior to others, for example by having greater access to high-ranked positions in political bodies and in the job market. The result is a system where different citizenship statuses are attached to different citizen groups (Rosenhek and Shalev 2000: 293-294). This is synonymous with a discriminatory system where some groups are marginalised. Therefore, in this thesis, which seeks to answer in what ways the politics of citizenship lead to differentiated citizenship in Bahrain, the latter is understood synonymous with signs of discrimination and marginalization in the society.

Differentiated citizenship, however, has also been interpreted in a positive way. Selective policies might sometimes be introduced to advantage marginalised groups, e.g., through giving them group specific rights such as guaranteed representation in political bodies (Kymlicka 1995: 173-176). This can be justified because of an unequal distribution of power

and a historical cleavage where some are privileged while others are oppressed. The introduction of differentiated citizenship, in such cases, is projected to correct this tendency and to bring about equality. Proponents of this practice refer to Israel as an example on where it can be implemented in order to promote equality between the Jewish and the Palestinian populations by giving the latter group specific privileges (Kook 2000: 270-273).

However, in this thesis the notion of differentiated citizenship is understood in negative terms. This is based on the assumption that citizenship in Bahrain is used as a tool to advantage government loyalists and oppress opponents, giving differentially graded citizenship as a result. This hypothesis is examined in chapters 4 and 5. Furthermore, differentiated citizenship can be employed as a strategy of divide and rule, in which people are kept apart in order to maintain the power of the ruler (Butenschøn 2000: 17-19). How the authorities are pursuing a divide and rule strategy by their politics of citizenship is discussed in the last chapter (in section 6.4).

3.4.1 Analytical Tools: Dimensions of Citizenship

Keith Faulks (2000) has developed dimensions which are useful in an analysis of citizenship. These dimensions are to reflect central principals of citizenship. They concern the extent of citizenship, the content of citizenship and the depth of citizenship. They are interconnected and, thus, have to be analysed both separately and jointly in order to understand the nature and development of citizenship in a certain place and time. Faulks stresses how these dimensions are interlinked with power; a discussion of citizenship is also a consideration of power (Faulks 2000: 6-13). With his political science foundation, Faulks' suggested dimensions make good guidelines for the study of politics of citizenship in this thesis. In particular, the dimensions are employed in chapter 5 which assesses the research question: *How do the politics of citizenship revocations illustrate the authorities' concept of citizenship in terms of extent, content, and depth of citizenship?* The three dimensions are explained further below.

Extent of citizenship deals with questions such as who are regarded as citizens in a certain state and who are not – and based on which criteria such decisions are taken. This dimension concerns membership and the process of becoming and remaining a member of a national

state. What are the requirements to be a citizen? In which cases can people be denied membership and the benefits which are connected to it? These questions deal with the issues of inclusion and exclusion. Who are included as members, while others are deemed unwelcome and excluded? Each state has its legal bounds on who can be included, i.e. who can enjoy the rights entitled only to citizens. In practise, this entails that the other, those who do not fit to the criteria of inclusion, have to be excluded (Faulks 2000: 7-8; Isin and Turner 2002: 5).

Content of citizenship concerns the mixture of rights and obligations reserved to citizens (Faulks 2000: 7). This second dimension reflects the principle of 'give and get,' which has been mentioned earlier in this chapter. What do citizens get and what are they expected to give back? On the one hand, which rights and benefits do they have? On the other hand, which obligations and duties are they bound to? For example, there are different types of rights, including (1) political rights such as the right to vote and to run for public office; (2) civil rights such as freedom of speech, access to a fair and independent judiciary, and freedom of religion and belief; (3) social rights such as the right to education; (4) cultural rights such as protection of groups of people and their culture; and (5) economic rights such as the right to work. The content of citizenship is made of the set of rights entitled to citizens.

This dimension explores the content of the social contract between the state and its inhabitants. It assesses citizenship *substantively* (Meijer and Butenschøn 2017: 11). An examination of this content can reflect whether a political community practises differentiated citizenship among its members. Does the bundle of rights vary based on group affiliation? Are there some rights which are entitled to some, but excluded from others? Is there a discriminatory distribution of rights? A state's inclusionary policies can cast light on these questions, where one besides asking who are included as citizens, also asks in what way(s) they are included. If differences are revealed in this regard, i.e. that there are degrees of inclusion, one can point to a graded citizenship system. This shows how an examination of the content of citizenship can offer insight into the extent of citizenship in a given state, i.e. the inclusion and exclusion of citizens. Furthermore, this demonstrates the interlinkage between the different dimensions.

Depth of citizenship considers the obligations and opportunities which follow of being part of a contractual relationship with the state. Which role is a citizen expected to have in society, including when it comes to political participation? This dimension covers demands of behaviour, but also the opportunities that citizens may have (Faulks 2000: 7 and 10-11). It concerns the right to openly discuss, engage and participate in matters of the common interest. What contributions can citizens make to promote their interests? Can they engage in organisations, trade unions, political parties, and – even – social movements? Or are such activities suppressed? This element is interlinked with the rights to freedom of association and freedom of expression. Here, the role of civil society is crucial. It functions both as a serious actor in the public sphere, which challenges the position of rulers, and as an institution for the promotion of the language of rights among citizens. In this way, the dimension of depth of citizenship sheds light on whether the state's power is being challenged and balanced by activism from the grassroots, or whether such activism is – more or less – contained and restricted by the authorities (Meijer and Butenschøn 2017: 11).

3.5 Approaching Bahrain through Citizenship

As mentioned, this thesis studies Bahrain's politics of citizenship. The citizenship approach is capable to fulfil the objective of uncovering central dimensions in the Bahraini society and the state's relationship with the inhabitants. In particular, the analytical framework provided by the citizenship approach helps with this task. For example, based on Faulk's dimensions, the study sheds light on the extent of citizenship, i.e. who are included and excluded as members of the Bahraini state; the content of citizenship, i.e. which rights and duties are entitled to the citizens and deprived of those who no longer are regarded as citizens; and the depth of citizenship, i.e. the opportunities for citizens to participate and engage in the society.

The significance of citizenship policies across the dimensions of extent, content, and depth of citizenship emphasises the relevance of analysing these policies. It also shows the interlinkage between the three dimensions; an examination of government policies demonstrates who are included as full members of the Bahraini community, what the content of citizenship is, and what this signifies about the role citizens are expected to have in society. Therefore, citizenship policies and the wider notion of politics of citizenship constitute the main focus of

this thesis. As mentioned, the politics of citizenship covers citizenship policies but also “any arena of social interaction where citizenship comes into the picture as a mechanism of power distribution” (Butenshon 2000: 6). Accordingly, the analysis of Bahrain’s politics of citizenship allows us to investigate all relevant features in the contractual relationship between the state and its inhabitants that can shed light on the power dynamics in this tiny gulf island.

The top-down approach with the focus on politics of citizenship signifies the authorities’ crucial role in forming the contractual relationship with citizens. In what ways and to which extent their politics results in a differentially graded citizenship, is one of the main concerns of this thesis. Are exclusionary policies especially directed towards some groups in society? Do some groups enjoy less rights than others? Furthermore, does the sectarian cleavage play a role in determining these dimensions? These questions are subjected to examination in the next chapters where emphasis is on explaining the occurrence of differentiated citizenship.

4 DIFFERENTIATED CITIZENSHIP

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the stance of differentiated citizenship in Bahrain. There are claims of state-sponsored discrimination and marginalization of certain groups in the Bahraini society. These claims are known as coming mainly from the Shia majority population. At the same time, citizens in general – regardless of their sect or creed affiliation – are reportedly targeted if they show “disloyalty” to the ruling elite. In fact, one of the main causes of the eruption of the 14 February uprising in 2011 ought to be the state-sponsored systematic and discriminatory differentiation between citizens. However, the Bahraini government stress that discrimination is prohibited by law. The government argues for its commitment to act in accordance with the laws, including article 18 in the 2002 constitution, which states:

“People are equal in human dignity, and citizens are equal before the law in public rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination among them on the basis of sex, origin, language, religion or creed.”

The above-mentioned claims are examined in this chapter. The chapter seeks to answer the first research question in this thesis: *In what ways and to what extent do the politics of citizenship lead to differentiated citizenship in Bahrain?* Based on reviews of existing documents, five arenas are identified as possible ways in which differentiated citizenship is produced. Three of them are discussed in this chapter, the ones related to (1) the educational system; (2) employment practices; and (3) religious freedom and cultural rights. Widespread discrimination is allegedly occurring in these arenas through different mechanisms and policies. The result is arguably a citizenship hierarchy constituting of first-class citizens, second-class citizens, and so forth.

A fourth way of differentiation concerns access to political participation. This was briefly handled in the introductory chapter and demonstrates why it is difficult for the Shia majority population to change the conditions they live under. The fifth way considers access to

citizenship and the related issue of exclusion of citizens by the state. This is discussed in the next chapter, which deals with the second research question concerning the politics of citizenship revocations. This chapter presents documentation on how the state's policies lead to differentiation between citizens in the three selected arenas, which further causes the creation of different citizenship statuses. Also included are the government's perspective on its relation with the citizenry and their replies on allegations of differentiation. The aim is to assess the accuracy of the claims of discrimination against – mainly – the Shia majority population. This should help to assess the extent of differentiated citizenship in Bahrain.

Based on the mentioned claims, citizens tend to have a different interpretation of the social contract and the contractual relationship with the state than what the latter has. A large number of the citizenry claim that their rights are being violated and that their living conditions are deteriorating, in particular in the aftermath of the 2011-uprising. On the other hand, the government claims that they respect citizens' rights and are progressing towards social and political reforms. However, under the presence of a differentiated citizenship regime – as this thesis finds evidence of, the government has different relationship terms with different citizens depending on their group affiliation. In this way, the politics of citizenship produce different state-citizen-relationships in the Bahraini society. In *which ways* the latter tends to be true, and the *extent* of it, is at the core of the examination in this chapter.

In what follows, the three selected ways and arenas in which differentiated citizenship are reportedly practised are presented and discussed in turn. Firstly, the conditions in the education system are presented, including issues related to the school curricula and the distribution of scholarships. Secondly follows an examination of the employment situation, in particular in the security sector and the health sector – but also other sectors in general. Thirdly, concerns related to religious freedom and cultural rights are assessed, such as the state's stance towards Shia places of worship and rites. Finally, the chapter sums up with a conclusion on the stance of differentiated citizenship in Bahrain.

4.2 Education

Article 7 in the Bahraini constitution states, “The State ... guarantees educational ... services to its citizens. Education is compulsory and free in the early stages as specified and provided by law.” According to official numbers from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, all Bahraini children and youths have access to education today. Nearly 100 % of children in the theoretical age group (6-14 years) for primary education are enrolled and complete school on this level. An overwhelmingly majority also complete secondary school. There is barely any illiteracy among Bahraini youths. Historically, Bahrain has experienced notable progress in this field. For example, the percentage of secondary school enrolment in 1977 was only 44, but it increased to 91 in 2011. Despite the fact that all segments in the Bahraini society likely take part in such progressive trends, there are reports about discriminatory practices in the education system. These concern the content of state-regulated school curricula and the distribution of scholarships, among others.

4.2.1 School Curricula

What pupils and students are taught in schools and universities is reportedly a way of differentiation between citizens and the different identities they have. The school curricula in Bahrain have allegedly for a long time promoted a specific account of what ‘correct’ religious beliefs are. Similarly, the curricula present a certain narrative of Bahrain’s history. By doing so, the authorities show favour to a specific faith and historical narrative that are approved by – and at the same time glorify – the Al-Khalifa ruling elite. Alternative beliefs and narratives that the majority of the population have are ignored or even denounced.

A joint statement by separate UN Special Rapporteurs stated that religious lessons in schools and universities “are based on the Maliki school of Sunni jurisprudence.”⁸ The Shia Jafaari tradition, which is adhered by the majority in Bahrain, is not discussed in the curricula (UN OHCHR 2015). This is also confirmed by the BICI, which wrote that “Proposals to include

⁸ These UN Special Rapporteurs are: Farida Shaheed, Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; Philip Alston, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights; and Heiner Bielefeldt, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

units on Jaafari jurisprudence have yet to materialise” (Bassiouni et.al. 2011: 24). This means that Bahraini authorities are not offering children of Shia citizens nor others the opportunity to learn about the Shia tradition in either public or private schools, which are obliged to follow the official curricula standards. Instead, the authorities are promoting the religious beliefs of the minority of citizens who – like the ruling family – follow the Maliki School. In doing so, the curricula even oversee other Sunni traditions such as the Shafi’i and Hanbali schools of jurisprudence, which are followed by some Sunnis in Bahrain (Bassiouni et.al. 2011: 23).

Furthermore, certain beliefs and practices contrary to the Maliki tradition are reportedly denounced as blasphemous in the curricula. Included is the act of placing one’s forehead on a so-called “turba,” a stone or a piece of clay, during prayer. Another example is to conduct “tawasul,” which is to direct petitions to other than God, traditionally to highly respected religious figures such as the prophet Mohammed and members of his household. Both these examples are practised by Shia Muslims, who have a different interpretation on the Islamic teaching on these issues. Young citizens are thus not only denied education on the beliefs of the majority, but also served “inflammatory anti-Shia propaganda at schools,” as UN Special Rapporteurs wrote in the above-mentioned statement (UN OHCHR 2015). The authorities give in this way approval to certain beliefs, while insulting the religious practices of a large portion of the citizenry.

Notwithstanding, the Bahraini government has allowed one public school to teach Shia faith along the standards set forth in the official curricula. It is the Jaafari Institute in Manama. However, only 1200 students are enrolled in this primary and secondary school (US State Department 2015). The great majority of Shia children attend ordinary schools where a certain Islamic tradition is highlighted while the religious identities of others are played down. Similarly, the authorities have permitted Shia organisations to offer outside-school courses in Shia faith, but these were recently shut down. For example, in June 2016, the two largest Shia organisations in the country, The Islamic Enlightenment Society (“Al-Tawiya”) and the Al-Risala Islamic Society, were both closed down by the Ministry of Social Development. They were accused of “instances of illegal fund-raising and money-laundering” (ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2017: 157-158). Several Shia clerics and societies have been charged with similar accusations in the last years – in what is perceived as part of a wider campaign against the Shia establishment in the country (see section 4.4 below).

The narrative of national history in the school curricula is another element that reportedly is a sign of differentiation in the education system. The narrative is centred on Al-Khalifa's subjection of Bahrain in the 1783 and the following political and social developments under their leadership. The story of Ahmed ibn Muhammad ibn Khalifa, the first monarch, is presented to students. He is called "Al-Fateh" (Ministry of Information Affairs 2014), a naming which is contentious. Even though the word can mean solely "the Conqueror," it is commonly used in the Arab world to refer to an introducer of Islam to an area. However, the inhabitants of Bahrain were truly Muslims – and more concrete: Shia – long before Al-Khalifa arrived (Louër 2013: 119-120; ADHRB, BCHR and BIRD 2015b: 21-23). The school curricula thus risk not only being selective, but also incorrect and misleading about the history of many students' great forefathers before the reign of Al-Khalifa.

An alternative historical narrative to the one presented in the school curriculum, which is distributed among Bahraini Shias, tells that the people of Bahrain became Shia Muslims shortly after the death of the prophet Mohammed. The Bahraini Shias are according to this view the indigenous inhabitants of the country (Kinninmont 2012: 15). Also Sunnis were present in the country before 1783, often as governors of the territory. However, such information can hardly be acquired through the official presentation of historical circumstances, because it focuses on Al-Khalifa and their reign. A central part of the official narrative is the liberation of Bahrain from the Persian Safavid dynasty, which ruled Bahrain prior to 1783 (Louër 2013: 118-120).⁹ In addition, there is limited historical information presented to students about ethnic minorities in Bahrain such as Bahrainis with Iranian origin – both the Shia "Ajeem" and Sunni "Houla" (according to a research associate at BIRD). Thus, the official history promoted by the government is in many ways the history of Al-Khalifa rather than the history of Bahrainis as a people.

Such marginalization of historical identities is not just found in school curricula, but also reportedly in public historical textbooks and in the tourism industry (ADHRB, BCHR and BIRD 2015b: 21-25). Such differentiation denies citizens – including school children – a complete and inclusive account of their national history. A possible effect is that a selective

⁹ Perhaps the only time the long-running presence of Shias in Bahrain prior to 1783 is clearly admitted, is when they are labelled in pro-governmental media as "Shia Safavids," though it is an derogatory label intended to frame the Shias as traitors and foreign to Arab nationality (ADHRB, BCHR and BIRD 2015b: 21-22).

historical narrative is glorified while the longer history and role played by inhabitants throughout centuries are ignored. Based on this misinformation that is presented to school students, along with other factors which are mentioned later, NGOs assess that discrimination in Bahrain against particularly the Shia majority “begins in the classroom” (ADHRB, BCHR and BIRD 2015b: 32).

4.2.2 Scholarships

When it comes to later educational stages, a progressive number of Bahrainis pursue higher education. Almost 39,000 students were enrolled in higher education in 2015, compared to 11,000 in 1999, according to UNESCO Institute for Statistics. The establishment of new higher education institutions in Bahrain since 1968 – and especially in the 2000s – influenced this tendency. Before 1968, there were no domestic higher education institutions. Students had to travel abroad to continue their education after secondary level (Mirza 2012: 6). Today, the Bahraini government offers scholarships and grants to students to help them pursue their higher education aspirations. In 2012, 2500 students received such offers from the Ministry of Education to study in Bahrain or abroad (Mirza 2012: 13).

Until recently, there was no reported discrimination in the distribution of scholarships. One of those who were granted scholarship is Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, who I interviewed. He was ranked one of top-ten students in Bahraini schools in 2004 and accordingly was sponsored by the state to continue his education in the UK. He completed a university degree and returned to Bahrain in 2010 (only to find himself facing problems getting a job, even though he also had work experience from the UK – more on this below under section 4.3.3). In this regard, Alwadaei had the following to say:

“[The right to have scholarship and higher education] was one of the areas Bahrain was pretty much good on. There was a kind of level of transparency. The top high-ranking students will – with their names and grades – be published in the state press. As well as when the government issues scholarship programs, they will be divided based on that the top [students] will secure the top scholarship. That was the basis until 2011.”

After the uprising in 2011, things changed. New grounds for the distribution of the scholarships were added. It was not enough to merely have good grades. The Ministry of Education introduced interviews for scholarship applicants. The Ministry argued that through the interviews, students would be offered education that better suits their aspirations. To be awarded a scholarship, the interview counts towards 40 % and academic achievement 60 %. However, observers report that the new distribution system has become a method of differentiation between citizens (Alwasat 2011). The questions asked in the interviews are political and irrelevant for the studies the students have applied for. Alwadaei explained further:

“They started to have an interview and within this interview you will be questioned about your loyalty to the ruling family and to the state – to the government, pretty much. If you do not fit in this category, if you have family which been imprisoned or have problems in relation to political arrests, then it is likely that you will not get chances or get those opportunities.”

Since 2011, there have been a number of complaining students who cannot pursue their higher education aspirations as a consequence of the new distribution system of scholarships. This is despite the fact that they manage to obtain high grades in school – some up to 99,1 % grade point average (GPA). The students report that they are asked in the interview about religious beliefs and political opinions, including loyalty to the ruling family. The Ministry of Education has furthermore stopped publicly publishing the names of students who receive scholarships, unlike their practice prior to 2011 (BCHR 2015). This is arguably to hide the act of arbitrary differentiation in the scholarship distribution because the names can reveal the creed affiliation of students – and thus clearly reveal any discriminatory behaviour. (More on how names can have this function on page 41.)

The introduction of interviews for scholarship applicants signifies that the state’s policy of differentiation is more visible and extensive today than what it was before 2011, as Ali Abdulemam noted when I interviewed him. The questions the Ministry of Education asks students in the interview are clearly targeted against Shia Muslims who constituted the majority of protestors under the 14 February Uprising. “They ask questions about ‘what will you do if there is a protest’ or ‘do you support or love the king.’ It is obvious now [that there

is discrimination in the Bahraini society,]" Abdulemam emphasised. It became "something normal that you have to get used to. [The authorities] do not decline it as before," he added.

Whether similar differentiation patterns – which in the educational field are becoming more extensive and visible – can be observed in current employment practices in Bahrain, are examined in the following section.

4.3 Employment

The Bahraini constitution, article 13, states that work is a duty and that "every citizen has the right to work and to choose the type of work within the bounds of public order and decency." Furthermore, it declares, "The State guarantees the provision of job opportunities for its citizens and the fairness of work conditions." However, discrimination in the field of employment is one of the main claims of Shia citizens in Bahrain. They claim discriminatory practices at the level of hiring, promotion, dismissal, and retirement. In particular, the security sector – including military and police – has been characterized as exclusionary when it comes to jobseekers from the Shia sect. In later years, similar patterns – but to a lesser extent – have been notified in the health and education sectors, among others. As a consequence of the 14 February uprising, thousands were fired from their work places. Most of the workers were Shias, but some of them were Sunnis, who allegedly had participated in the opposition movement. According to the government, most of them have been permitted to return to work today (US State Department 2016: 10).

4.3.1 Security sector

The security sector in Bahrain is perceived as inaccessible by a great part of the citizenry. The Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior are reportedly hiring security forces and police staffs from abroad, while restricting the opportunities for some native Bahrainis to serve in the national security apparatus. A clear sectarian based differentiation has been reported in this regard. The total percentage of Shia citizens in the security services is believed to be about 2-5 %, while they constitute up to 70 % of the population (Siperco 2010). It is estimated that at least 95 % of those working in Bahrain Defense Force belong to the Sunni creed, while

the same is 90 % or more among police forces (ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2017: 174-175). Furthermore, the security sector is one of the largest employers in the country. The exclusion of Shias from this sector thus significantly restricts the job opportunities for those citizens. At the same time, it keeps them out of leading positions in the state.

The Bahraini government does not publish the creed background of public employees, so the numbers above remain estimations. However, based on reported experiences of Shia Bahrainis along with revealed documents from state agencies, the estimations appear to reflect the reality in Bahrain. For example, the so-called “Bandargate” report in 2006 – named after the author Saleh al-Bandar, a British citizen who worked as an adviser to the Bahraini government at that time – revealed that the government deliberately aimed to exclude Shias from the police and military in order to “improve the general situation of Sunnis” (Louër 2012: 100-101). Furthermore, in the interview with Ebrahim Al-Aradi, he mentioned a personal story about his uncle who once worked in the military. Al-Aradi was a kid when he saw how the military no longer wanted to employ his uncle. Al-Aradi narrated:

“A minimal number of Shias, who was and still represents the majority [in Bahrain], was employed in the military. After the 1980s, they were dismissed totally from there. If an [Shia] individual was hired thereafter, he was hired as a cook in the kitchen or alike. My uncle Jameel Al-Hawaj, who passed away couple of days ago, was employed in the Bahraini military and was even responsible for training. He trained cadres. He was dismissed and retired in late 1980s without any reason. I was little. We did not understand why it had to be like this.”

The dismissals in the 1980s and the exclusion of Shias in the security sector since then, can be explained by the increased role played by Iran in the region after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The Gulf countries feared that the revolutionary forces would influence their own Shia populations (Diwan 2013: 154). The result was a deepening mistrust of Shia citizens and the perception of them as a security threat (more on this in the last chapter). Moreover, differentiation in employment in the security services is evident in the research conducted by Justin Gengler (2015). He conducted a national survey of 500 random households in Bahrain in 2009 in what is believed to be “the first-ever mass political survey of Bahraini citizens” (Gengler 2015: 9). His results show that 12 % of the working Sunni respondents – or 17 %

when considering only Sunni male respondents – said they worked in the military or police. None of the Shia respondents did the same (Gengler 2015: 114). Besides that this points to a sectarian based hiring system in the security sector, it reflects the high number of security personnel among workers from the Sunni creed. This likely influences the power relations between Sunni and Shia citizens in Bahrain, along with influencing the state relations with different segments of the population.

However, the Bahraini government argues that it takes measures to make the security sector more inclusionary – without clearly admitting committing the observed widespread discrimination. For example, in 2012, they said that they have provided opportunities for employment in the police service “to all the components of the community without discrimination” (UN OHCHR 2012b). They claimed that they will hire 500 police officers annually. US State Department reported in 2016 that according to their contacts, Shia citizens have been among those employed, “but not in significant numbers.” Although this can be due to the observed discriminatory practises in hiring, US State Department stated that “The Government of Bahrain notes its difficulty recruiting Shia, likely due to a cycle of mutual mistrust.” This is a noteworthy point; it is likely that Shia citizens self-exclude themselves from security services due to the latter’s reputation as responsible for abuses against Shia Muslims, in particular. The outcome of differentiated citizenship in Bahrain can thus partly be explained by this factor. The Bahraini government though “continues actively to recruit and employ Shia throughout the Public Security Forces,” as reported by the US State Department (2016: 7).

Notwithstanding the government’s plans of employing Shias, it is notified that it is only as police officers. Employment in other security services such as Bahrain Defense Force (BDF) is not integrated. Furthermore, it is difficult to prove whether or how many of the recruited officers are Shias because demographic information about them is not published (POMED 2012: 14-15). What other sources report is that when Shia citizens first are enrolled in the security services, it is usually in low-ranking positions such as “a cook,” as Al-Arabi stated, or as “informants” or in simple “administrative roles” (USCIRF 2017: 131-132; ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2017: 174-175). The high-ranked and more security-related positions are instead distributed to members of the ruling elite. For example, the Commander-in-Chief of BDF, along with the President of the National Security Agency and the Commander of

National Guard, are all from the Al-Khalifa clan (BNA 2016a). Other Sunni citizens enjoy similar positions, as the above-stated sources reflect. The same applies to recruited Sunnis from abroad, as reported below.

There are numerous reports that Bahraini authorities are hiring thousands of security personnel from abroad rather than employing from all segments in the Bahraini society. This has reportedly extended post-2011. For example, adverts were found in Pakistani newspapers shortly after the outbreak of the 14th February uprising calling for security personnel in Bahrain. 2500 former servicemen in Pakistan were recruited during a few months in 2011 to serve in Bahrain. Most of them were of Baluch origin (Mashal 2011). Also other nationals such as Jordanians, Syrians, and Yemenis were – and still are – recruited. In 2014, 2500 former retired officers from Jordan were serving in Bahrain's security apparatus (Law 2007; Kafai and Shehabi 2014). All recruits tend to come from Sunni-majority countries and are Sunnis. Some of them are naturalised in Bahrain. In this way, they are arguably also used as a mechanism to change the sectarian balance in the demography (Freedom House 2017; Peterson 2013: 240-241) (the latter is discussed in the next chapter, under section 5.2.3). Furthermore, they are believed to be more willing to shoot at the predominantly Shia street opposition than what Shia officers would be (Meijer and Danckaert 2015: 214).

4.3.2 Health sector

Similar patterns of imported labour whilst native Bahrainis are left unemployed can be found in both the health sector and the education sector. However, they appear to be to a lesser extent than what is found in the security sector (Wehrey 2014: 216). Due to the length constraint of this thesis, only the case of health care workers is examined to illustrate the situation. For example, according to a news article in Alwasat from this year, 56 % of the graduated Bahraini nurses remain without a job three years after graduation. They wait for a call from the Ministry of Health, which is responsible for their employment. The Ministry argues that there are currently no available jobs for them. However, the graduated nurses report that they were surprised that the Ministry newly had advertised for vacant nurses positions on a website. One of the interviewed in the article says that she witnesses that the Ministry had employed foreigners while the Bahraini graduates remained unemployed (Abdullah 2017). Such observed demotion or exclusion of natives, the majority of whom are

Shias, illustrates a possible extension of differentiation policies in other job sectors than that of security services.

Previously, it was normal to be hired as a nurse within just a few months after graduation (Abdullah 2017). The recent change in this field is arguably related to the 2011-uprising and the role employees in the health sector played in it. 200 medics were fired while 48 were arrested and prosecuted in what is believed to be a revenge for treating protestors (ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2017: 183). The government, on the other hand, accused them of spreading false rumours and information, illegal acquisition and use of medicine and medical facilities, and possession of firearms and weapons (Bassiouni et.al. 2011: 176-177). Recently, in March 2017, a leading paediatric surgeon in Bahrain, doctor Ali Al-Ekri, was released from prison after completing a five-year sentence based on such charges (Hilliard 2017). Doctor Ebrahim Al-Aradi, whom I interviewed, recalled why medics were persecuted. In contrast to the narrative presented by the government, he said:

“As doctors, we participated in a protest against the minister of health because ambulances were denied to go and treat protesters at the Pearl Roundabout after the attack on it at the start of the uprising. Every doctor and medical staff participated in a huge protest demanding the resignation of the minister of health.” However, what was clear was that “The authorities were determined on that we should not treat the injured. They punished us for treating people the authorities do not want to live; these people are our brothers and sisters who were protesting.”

Al-Aradi fled the country in 2011 out of fear of arrest because he had spoken to international media about what he witnessed during the uprising. He stated that some colleagues inside Bahrain, who had been dismissed or arrested in 2011, have still not been rehired. One of them is neurosurgeon Taha al-Derazi, who was forced to retire from his position at the Salmaniya Medical Complex in 2012, as reported by ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR (2017: 183). In 2015, Al-Aradi was himself further persecuted. His Bahraini citizenship was revoked and he was made stateless while in exile. (This case is further exemplified in the next chapter about citizenship revocations.)

It is not untypical for Bahraini authorities to chase employees or restrict the job opportunities of people after facing dissidence. Oppositional activity greatly impacts the relationship and trust between the ruler and the ruled. In 2007 when Bahrain also witnessed some protests, the minister for industry and commerce – Hassan Fakhro – said:

“There is a lack of confidence between the ruled and the rulers. It is not unusual. There is a small percentage who do not have loyalty to the state. Sometimes, for good reasons, you have to be careful who you employ.” (Law 2007 cited in Gengler 2013: 61)

This statement signifies that the “good reasons” are, according to the government, acts of dissidence. Such acts classify a citizen as “disloyal.” Most of the 48 arrested medics in 2011 were Shias, but one was not, according to Physicians for Human Rights (Sollom and Atkinson 2012: 6). This shows that when a citizen is perceived as a dissident, creed membership plays a minor role. Sunnis are also exposed to reprisals and harassment if they oppose the regime. This is exemplified in Sunni opposition politicians such as Ibrahim Sharif, who has been mostly imprisoned since 2011. His secular political society Waad risks being dissolved by the authorities in an on-going trial (as of April 2017). The party is accused of “incitement of acts of terrorism and promoting violent and forceful overthrow of the political regime” (BNA 2017). The Shia Islamic party Al-Wefaq was dissolved last year based on similar charges. However, both these parties adopt the means of peaceful opposition and have traditionally called for a democratic constitutional monarchy rather than the overthrow of the regime (Manama Document 2011). The regime is not even willing to compromise on the solution of constitutional monarchy, which would imply the continuation of the Al-Khalifa throne – though with a significant decline in their power. This illustrates the fact that the authorities demand loyalty in the form of political obedience from the citizenry. If a citizen – regardless of his or her sect – engage in political opposition, the person can expect to be demoted to a second-class citizen by restrictions in his or her freedom and opportunities. However, observers note the fact that even the reprisals against dissidents have a sectarian nature. The retribution against Shia dissidents have been more severe than what Sunni dissidents face (Kinninmont 2012: 9-10).¹⁰

¹⁰ Perhaps the case of “Bahrain13” can be used as an example: in 2011, 13 prominent oppositional figures were sentenced in the same case on charges such as “plotting to overthrow the regime.” Among them was one Sunni,

4.3.3 Other

Besides the long-existing discrimination in the security sector, and the recent developments in the health and education sectors, Shia Muslims reportedly experience similar patterns in the job market in general. They face discrimination at the level of hiring and promotion, as well as dismissal and retirement. Several of my interviewees had personal stories to tell in this regard. For example, Alwadaei was less than 25 years old when he had a degree in engineering along with two years of work experience from companies in the UK. Regarding this, he said:

“What I can offer to my country was quite significant in terms of my age and the qualifications I had and the experiences. [I was one of] very few people who have been educated in Britain as well as received some work experience from Britain. I thought it will be something quite helpful to build up my CV and to secure a job. But I did face some problems. Part of those problems is to do either with my faith or my sect as being Shia.”

The names of job seekers are one of the mechanisms in which a citizen's sect background can be identified. Names can, in many cases, reveal a person's sect affiliation and thus be used to exclude people from obtaining a job. For example, the surname “Alwadaei” is known in Bahrain to belong to a Shia family. In addition, if your designation is “Sayed,” that most probably means you are a Shia. The designation “Sayed” indicates that you are a descendant of prophet Muhammed through one of the Imams who are followed by Shia Muslims (Oxford Dictionaries). Another method in which sect background can be revealed is by the job seeker's address. In Bahrain, there is a clear pattern of residential segregation, in which some cities or villages are resided predominantly or exclusively by Shias, such as Bani Jamra and Diraz, whereas others consist predominantly of Sunni residents, such as al-Rifa (Matthiesen 2013: 54-55). A third way for sect identification, which is recently found listed as a requirement in advertisements for government jobs, is the marriage certificate of the jobseeker and his or her parents. There are complaints about the irrelevance of marriage certificates in a job context. They are believably used to sort out the sect background of the

Ibrahim Sharif, who was sentenced to five years imprisonment. The rest were Shias; all but one were sentenced to 15 years or life in prison (BIRD 2014).

jobseeker, and thus reflect a new way in which differentiation takes place (ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2017: 175).

Notwithstanding, in the case of Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, he managed to get a job in Bahrain after being unemployed for a while. The job was relevant to his educational background, but it was under-paid. Others do also report under-payment when they are first employed. One of them was Abdulemam. He said, “You know you deserve better than this, but you are working cheaper than your market values, just because your identity linked to your sect.” He recalled how his promotion was delayed because his manager was afraid that the “other Sunnis will cause problems,” because they can perceive it as being that the manager “always promote Shias.” This case along with the above-mentioned one illustrates how the sectarian dimension plays a significant role in working life in Bahrain. Even though employees such as Abdulemam deserve promotion – or, in other cases, simply to be hired – the employer has to take into consideration ‘what the Sunnis (in the work place) will say.’ This is certainly so because of the sectarian tension in the Bahraini society, which is to a great extent sponsored by the state policies (Gengler 2015: 87-88). An individual is identified by his or her sect, even though the latter is contextually irrelevant, e.g. in a job context where qualifications should be the determining factor for hiring and promotion of employees.

Thus, in Bahrain, creed background influences a citizen’s opportunity to work as well as his and her opportunities in the work place. Such opportunities are thus not distributed merely on ground of professional qualifications, but also according to the sectarian dimension. However, according to the survey conducted by Gengler (2015), professional qualifications have a certain impact on citizens’ job opportunities. Overall, it is better to be Shia and have qualifications in form of higher education than to not have so. For example, among college graduates, Gengler found no statistically significant discrepancies between Sunnis and Shias’ chances of working in the public sector versus working in private. Gengler furthermore writes that among Shias with a public-sector position, having a bachelor’s degree or higher “dramatically improves” their expected professional level. In contrast, Shia citizens with secondary education or less are the greatest subjects of differentiation in the job market. Gengler’s results show that while 62 % of Sunni employees with secondary education work in the public sector, only 36 % of the Shias with the same educational background do the same (Gengler 2015: 108-118).

There are concerns that there will be increased numbers of Shias with low education as a result of the observed discriminatory practices in the education system, including the disproportional distribution of scholarships and the fact that many imprisoned Shia youths are deprived of their right to education (ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2017: 80). This can thus lead to more employment discrimination as research shows that Shias are discriminated the most when they have less education. On the other hand, the recent years' developments signify increased discrimination at the high-education level too. The reported trends in the health and education sectors, where graduates are unemployed while foreigners are hired from abroad, can support this assumption. Another element that can support this is the widespread dismissal campaign of employees in the aftermath of the 2011-uprising. More than 4600 employees were dismissed for participation in the uprising (US State Department 2016: 10). One of them was Alwadaei, who was arrested shortly after the start of the uprising.

Although the dismissals in 2011 happened to a massive scale, it was not a new phenomenon to deprive political activists of their work place. In September 2010, Abdulemam was arrested and, shortly after, dismissed from his work. He recalled, "I had just been arrested. I did not go to public prosecution. No court, no charge yet. Based on what ground they fired me?" A reason that Abdulemam's family received for the dismissal was "absence from work." This was also one of the most-used justifications for the 2011-dismissals, according to the BICI (2011: 331). However, as Abdulemam noted, the dismissals came arguably as a consequence of being "involved in activities against the government." As of January 2014, the Bahraini government claimed that most of the dismissed workers have been able to return to work (US State Department 2016: 10).

However, both Alwadaei and Abdulemam have never been able to return to their jobs because they were forced to flee the country. NGOs report about similar cases of people still suspended from work, even though they reside inside Bahrain. Some of them are serving sentences in jail due to their role in the uprising, for example, life-sentenced Abduljalil Al-Singace who was a professor at University of Bahrain (Committee of Concerned Scientists 2017). Others have been permitted to return to work, but in lower-level and lower-paid positions (ADHRB, BCHR and BIRD 2015b: 29). A third group have been forced to retire on grounds of "settling of accounts", as experienced by some doctors such as Taha al-Derazi

(ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2017: 183). Al-Derazi and Al-Singace are Shia, in similarity to most other workers who were affected by the post-uprising crackdown.

All in all, this sums up to reflect a pattern of economic marginalization of Shia citizens. The occurrence of restricted job opportunities, low-salaries, dismissals, or forced retirements are to a great extent deliberated at members of one sect. The official policy affects individuals, but certainly also their dependent families and the status of the Shia group as a whole in the Bahraini society. The result is in many ways a downgrade of Shia citizens, along with dissident Sunni citizens in some cases. In the differentiated citizenship regime in Bahrain, labour is being imported from abroad while a large number of natives are sidelined and sometimes almost excluded such as in the security sector. This, in combination with restrictions in other arenas, reflects the severity of the current situation. The next section deals with the developments in the arena of religious and cultural rights, which have also reportedly deteriorated in the last years.

4.4 Religious Freedom and Cultural Rights

Bahraini constitution states the absoluteness of freedom of religion and conscience. This is declared in article 22:

“The State guarantees the inviolability of worship, and the freedom to perform religious rites and hold religious parades and meetings in accordance with the customs observed in the country.”

Furthermore, state officials have on several occasions recalled the unity and coexistence of the Bahraini people, regardless of creed and religion of citizens. For example, in 2012, the king Hamad Al-Khalifa said, “we, in Bahrain, are a united people whose sects, religions and segments co-exist in peace” (BNA 2012a). Some points can be made to the apparent religious tolerance showed by the Bahraini regime, for example, in the fact that there are some Shia feast days as public holidays (Louër 2013: 120). Others note that Shia mosques in Bahrain exceed those belonging to the Sunni community (Bassiouni et.al. 2011: 24-25).

However, great violations of religious freedom are claimed by the Shias in Bahrain, in particular after the 2011-uprising (Kinninmont 2012: 15). These violations are performed on a collective basis where Shia citizens as a group are targeted. Observers report a pattern of collective punishment on Shia places of worship, rites, clerics, and villages inhabited by Shia Bahrainis. The result of such public policies – including the discrimination in arenas such as education and employment – is marginalization of Shias so they collectively are de-facto second-class citizens. ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR (2015a; 2015b) have published a two-volumes report on this issue where they conclude that Shias are set “apart in their own land.” The government, on the other hand, argues that it acts in accordance with its laws. Its apparent attacks on Shia individuals and places are justified with claims that the latter do not comply with existing laws.

4.4.1 Places of Worship

In 2011, the authorities damaged or demolished dozens of mosques and religious buildings belonging to the Shia community in Bahrain. At least 53 such buildings were damaged, in which at least 28 were fully ruined (Bassiouni et.al. 2011: 319; ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2017: 152). UN Special Rapporteurs stated in 2015 that many of these “buildings were culturally as well as religiously significant” (UN OHCHR 2015). For example, one of the demolished mosques was the Barbaghi mosque (Bassiouni et.al. 2011: 322). It contained the tomb of a well-known Shia religious scholar called Ameer Mohammed al-Barbagh. It was built in 1549, i.e., more than 200 years before the start of Al-Khalifa’s reign (ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2017: 155). Another example is the Abu Dharr al-Ghifari mosque, which was more than 70 years old. It was demolished on 19 April 2011 along with nine other Shia places of worship during a couple of hours (Bassiouni et.al. 2011: 322-323). The demolition of these mosques is considered an attack on Shias’ right to keep their religious places of worship and a damage of their cultural heritage in the country.

The authorities said that the demolished mosques were unauthorized. This justification was looked upon with favour by the BICI. They found that most of the destructions were in accordance with Royal Decree Law No. 19 of 2002, which states that buildings on public lands require a royal deed as well as a building permit. Most of the demolished sites violated this law by not complying with one or both of these requirements (Bassiouni et.al. 2011: 327-

328). Locals and users of the mosques, on the other hand, looked upon this justification with ridicule. They pointed to the fact that many of the sites, for example the Barbaghi mosque from 1549, were built before the modern bureaucratic state was in function in Bahrain. The BICI, despite it found support for the authorities' justification, had the following to note:

“The Government should have realised that under the circumstances, in particular the timing, the manner in which demolitions were conducted and the fact that these were primarily Shia religious structures, the demolitions would be perceived as a collective punishment and would therefore inflame the tension between the Government of Bahrain and the Shia population.” (Bassiouni et.al. 2011: 329)

In particular the timing of these acts, that they were performed shortly after the crackdown on the 14 February uprising, is crucial. The destructions can consequently easily be interpreted as part of the crackdown on opponents of the state – the latter perceived as the Shias collectively. Some even call the action “the most direct anti-Shia assault” (Diwan 2013: 170). However, the Bahraini government promised to rebuild these religious sites, as recommended by the BICI as well as the second-cycle UPR. In Bahrain's third-cycle UPR National Report, published in April 2017, the government claims the “complete implementation” of this and all other BICI recommendations. The civil society disagrees. Admittedly, some of the mosques have been rebuilt, but some were relocated and others were reconstructed to something else. The above-mentioned Barbaghi mosque was relocated, while there are plans to set up a public park where it once was the Abu Dharr al-Ghifari mosque (Al-Mosawi 2013). In addition, some of the rebuilt mosques have been built by funding from the Shia community rather than the state (US State Department 2016: 11; ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2017: 152-155).

Al-Khamis Mosque is another mosque that is of religious as well as cultural significance for Shia citizens in Bahrain. It was not demolished along with the other mentioned sites, but the authorities have reportedly taken other measures to erase the historical Shia linkage to the mosque. Part of the mosque is truly more than 1000 years old (Al-Alawi 2017a). Reportedly, it was originally a Shia mosque, reflecting the Shias' long presence in the area. Alwadaei of BIRD spoke about their investigation into this site:

“Al-Khamis mosque is considered to be the oldest mosque in the country. There were ways of Shia references in the *Mihrab* [the wall that indicate prayer direction] and other places in the mosque. The government over years literally removed every single element which root or linked the Shia ideology or Shia references into this site. The only references you can look into are published in books which we find in the British library, some of them published in the 1883 and are fairly old.”

Another research associate at BIRD mentioned that such Shia references were the standing of “Ali is the *Wali* [guidance] of God”, which is part of the Shia profession of faith. Alwadaei emphasized that the removal of such signs can be considered a policy of “cleansing” of Shia heritage. It indicates that the Bahraini government has “a vision of removing the indigenous population or to erase [their heritage in the country].” Moreover, the government is now projected to turn the Al-Khamis mosque into a museum (Al-Alawi 2017a). It will thus be another site, which is presented to tourists and others, where the government fails to present the Shias’ historical linkage to this specific place and to the country in general.

However, the Bahraini king has himself admitted that Shias were in Bahrain since the beginning of Al-Khalifa’s reign. He stated in 2012, “we in Bahrain live as one people since long time ago. We were together as Sunni and Shia since we were in Zubara and we came to Bahrain together” (BNA 2012b). Zubara is an area in today’s Qatar where Al-Khalifa came from when they conquered Bahrain. Although the king recognised with this statement the fact that the Shias are not recent arrivals in Bahrain, this statement is in itself contentious (Kinninmont 2012: 15). He failed to admit that Shias were truly in the country long before the Al-Khalifa came from Zubara to reign over Bahrain. The Shias, and certainly also Sunnis, did not “come” with the conquerors; they were there long before, as historical signs prove – if only these signs are allowed to exist, be recalled by the public, and not be erased. Such failure to address the indigenous population’s longstanding history – independent and prior to that of Al-Khalifa’s – consists a part of the rulers’ policy of inferiority aimed at particularly the Shia population. The attacks on Shia places of worship represent a cornerstone in this policy.

4.4.2 Rites

Notwithstanding the recent destruction or transformation of places of worship originally belonging to the Shias, some have noted that Bahraini authorities have historically displayed “a significant degree of tolerance towards the expression of Shi’i religiosity.” The making of some Shia feast days as public holidays are brought as an example on such “tolerance.” In 1973, the ninth and tenth days of the month of Muharram in the Islamic calendar – when the Shias mark the religious event of Ashura – were declared as public holidays by the then Emir of Bahrain. Another expression of respect towards the Shia citizenry has allegedly been “by making donations during major Shi’i festivals or by funding the restoration of *hussainiyya* [Shi’i religious buildings].” A third assumption is that “The Shi’i have also been able to practice their rituals publicly without any restrictions” (Louër 2013: 120-121).

As a matter of fact, there were *hussainiyyas* (or *maatam* as they are called in Bahrain) among the 53 religious buildings damaged by the authorities in 2011 (Bassiouni et.al. 2011: 319). In addition, there are evidences which point to the incorrectness of especially the last assumption about unrestricted practice of Shia rituals, in particular when taking into account recent developments post-2011. For example, UN Special Rapporteurs raised concerns in 2011 about “police attacks of religious processions held in Bahrain by members of the Shia community.”¹¹ They reported that Shias were attacked with birdshot and tear gas during religious gatherings in June 2011. Some were arrested, while a house in one of the commemorating Shia villages was set on fire by police forces (UN OHCHR 2011).

Furthermore, while it is true that the religious days of Ashura are public holidays in Bahrain, Shias have reportedly witnessed restrictions on how they can mark these days. For example, in both 2015 and 2016, several Shia preachers and singers were interrogated on grounds of their speeches during Ashura sermons. The Shia community also traditionally invites preachers from abroad to lead the sermons. At least nine religious preachers were denied entry to Bahrain in October 2016, although they had visa entries approved from the Ministry of Interior (Al-Halwachi 2016). Moreover, police forces removed religious signs such as flags and banners that were set up for the occasion. They attacked with shotgun and tear gas those

¹¹ These UN Special Rapporteurs are: Heiner Bielefeldt, Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; Maina Kiai, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; and Frank La Rue, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

who protested against the removals. Although restrictions of religious freedom during the month of Muharram have arguably escalated since 2011 (BCHR 2016; ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2015c), similar restrictions have also been reported prior to 2011 (see, e.g., BCHR 2009).

From the perspective of the Bahraini government, they do not attack the religious rites of the Shia population. They justify their actions through stressing that they are taking “necessary measures to maintain public order and security” in accordance with the laws. For example, in their reply to the UN Special Rapporteurs in 2011 on the reported police attacks on religious processions, they communicate that the reported processions were “unauthorized rallies ... with the aim of undermining national security.” They deny that they arrested or injured anyone, nor burned a house, while dealing with the situation. They rather claim that participants on these gatherings started to attack security forces with “stones and iron bars” and chanted “anti-regime slogans” (Bahrain Mission to the UN 2011).

Similar justifications are used on the reported restrictions on Shias’ commemoration of Ashura. For example, the authorities stress that religious occasions cannot be used to raise political issues. Preachers are interrogated because they allegedly violate this regulation. Likewise, signs are removed because they contain political slogans (BNA 2016b; Ministry of Interior 2015). However, Shia voices deny such accusations. They emphasize that they commemorate their religious rites as they always have. For example, they said that the removed signs are typical Ashura slogans, which have been displayed during Muharram for years. They rather interpret these moves as an escalation of attacks on the religious freedom of Shia citizens (ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2015c). This view is supported by The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). In their 2017 annual report, they note the fact that the conditions are “deteriorating” in Bahrain and that “many restrictions on religious freedoms are done under the guise of protecting national security” (USCIRF 2017: 1 and 128).

A further example on the restrictions Shia citizens are facing in today’s Bahrain is the de-facto prohibition of Shia performance of Friday prayers since July 2016. Friday prayers are considered to be one of the most recommended rituals in Islam generally. The Shia community usually held Friday prayer in the Imam Al-Sadiq mosque in “Diraz,” but citizens

have recently been prevented from entering this village. The Shia-dominated village has been almost “besieged” since authorities revoked the citizenship of Sheikh Isa Qassim, the most prominent Shia cleric in Bahrain who resides in this village, in June 2016 (more on this in the next chapter). All entrances to the village are either blocked or check-pointed by security forces. Except residents, citizens are prevented from entering the village (Bahrain Mirror 2017). This has resulted in the Shia community not being able to hold Friday prayers recently, in what is considered a grave violation of their religious rights. UN rights experts state that this and other recent developments show that “Shias are clearly being targeted on the basis of their religion” (UN OHCHR 2016).¹²

4.5 Conclusion

The examination in this chapter shows, firstly, that differentiated citizenship in Bahrain is situated (already) in the education system. Expressions of differentiation are found in the biased school curricula, which undermine the religious and historical identity of particularly the Shia citizens. They are also found in the distribution of scholarships between higher education applicants, in which political and religious affiliations play a significant role. Secondly, the employment arena contains several signs of differentiation, in which Sunni nationals as well as expats tend, in many occasions, to be preferred to Shia job seekers. The security sector is almost excluded for Shia citizens. Shias also face problems in other sectors at the level of hiring and promotion, as well as being specially subjected to forced dismissals and retirements. Thirdly, destruction of places of worship and restrictions on performance of rites reflect the state’s attacks on the religious freedom of Shia citizens. In many ways, these attacks also constitute violations of Shias’ cultural rights, in which their heritage in the country is being erased or ignored – as the biased school curricula also can exemplify.

The foregoing illustrates *some* of the ways in which the politics of citizenship by Bahraini authorities result in the marginalization of particularly Shia citizens in the country. There are certainly other signs of differentiation that could be added in each of the studied arenas as

¹² These rights experts are: Sètondji Adjovi, Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; David Kaye, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Maina Kiai, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Heiner Bielefeldt, Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; and Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

well as in other arenas, for example the use of excessive force against Shia and media marginalization of Shia. They are not dealt with in this thesis due to the thesis' length constraint. However, what have been presented should serve as sufficient illustrations of the stance of differentiated citizenship in Bahrain. Citizens are treated differently and, accordingly, they end up with different socioeconomic positions. Sect membership plays a major role in determining a citizen's position or status in the citizenship hierarchy. The examination furthermore indicates that differentiated citizenship is present to a large extent. Each of the three arenas that were assessed – education, employment, and religious and cultural rights – are fundamental for individuals and certainly to social groups as a whole. The arenas contained grave tendencies of differentiation between segments of the Bahraini society. What can be added is that the measures of discrimination appear to be more extensive, leading to extended differentiated citizenship, in the aftermath of the 2011-uprising. The recent developments have in many ways lead to deteriorated conditions for an already degraded Shia population.

Other points in the examination should be noted. (These points are further discussed in the last chapter). Firstly, Sunni citizens in Bahrain are also subjected to degradation from the privileged position when showing expressions of “disloyalty.” Oppositional politicians and health care workers who treated protesters – both being imprisoned or dismissed, although some of them are Sunni – serve as examples. Simultaneously, Shia citizens are not fully excluded from different sectors in the state – even in the most extreme case, which is the security sector where a minority constituting of 2-5 % is believed to follow Shia Islam. The distinction is, however, that Shias generally are systematically targeted as a group – collectively – while Sunnis have to express “disloyalty” to be targeted. Secondly, what the foregoing indicates is a general mistrust by the Bahraini regime towards the Shia majority population. For example, the regime invests in importing labour forces from abroad rather than employing natives. There appears to be a fear of losing control and power if the Shias become empowered. Thirdly – and on the other hand, this mistrust appears to be mutual. Shias constituted the majority of protestors in the 2011-uprising against the regime. They truly partly self-exclude themselves from security services due to the latter's reputation as abuser.

The contractual relationship between the state and citizens is affected by the recent developments and the mutual mistrust. From the view of the state, the laws – including mentioned articles from the constitution – protect citizens’ right. The authorities only take measures to “maintain public order and security.” From the view of citizens, first and foremost Shia citizens, the social contract embodied in the constitution are being violated. Shias are being treated differently from Sunni citizens. Members of the Sunni sect are privileged, making their relationship with the state contracted by favourable terms. In contrast, members of the Shia community do not enjoy the same terms. Numerous documentations – as presented in this chapter –indicate that the latter group is the inferior party in Bahrain’s hierarchical and discriminatory differentiated citizenship regime.

5 CITIZENSHIP REVOCATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter further examines the stance of differentiated citizenship in Bahrain, which was handled in chapter 4. The chapter assesses another way in which differentiation between citizens is arguably taking place. It concerns the issue of access to citizenship and – more concrete – the citizenship revocations handed out by Bahraini authorities in the last few years. The chapter seeks to answer the second research question under examination in this thesis, which is: *How do the politics of citizenship revocations illustrate the authorities' concept of citizenship in terms of extent, content, and depth of citizenship?*

Access to citizenship is a fundamental arena of regulation in every modern state. How state authorities regulate issues related to inclusion and exclusion of citizens is of major significance. It determines people's statuses in relation to a state. In cases of revocation of citizenship – as that happening in Bahrain – individuals are transmitted from the status or position of 'citizen' to 'non-citizen.' The rights and duties they once had as citizens are deprived of them. In order to understand how Bahraini authorities define citizenship in terms of extent, content, and depth of citizenship, this chapter examined the following questions: Who are stripped of their citizenship and on which grounds? What are they stripped of; what does it mean to lose citizenship? And, what do the politics of citizenship revocations signify about the authorities' conception of citizenship?

This chapter examines the three dimensions of citizenship – extent, content, and depth – separately. Each section begins with a short recapitulation of the examined dimension as presented by Keith Faulks (2000) (for a more detailed account of the dimensions, see chapter 3). Thereafter follows a substantive analysis of how the selected dimension functions in the Bahraini context in light of the authorities' politics of citizenship revocations. The chapter sums up with a conclusion on the research question by assessing what the examination of the different dimensions of citizenship jointly illustrate about the authorities' concept of

citizenship. A short notation is also found in the conclusion on how this chapter contributes to the research on statelessness and its causes and consequences.

5.2 Extent of Citizenship

Extent of citizenship concerns the issue of inclusion and exclusion of members of the political community which constitutes a state (Faulks 2000: 7-8). In this regard, the citizenship revocations in Bahrain shed light on the exclusionary policies of the state. The Citizenship Act of 1963 states that citizenship can be revoked only “by order of His Majesty the Governor,” i.e., the king. However, Bahrain’s legislators, with the king’s approval, have since 2012 amended laws in order to give similar powers to other authorities. In a 2014 amendment of the Citizenship Act, the power to revoke citizenship was extended to the Ministry of Interior. Furthermore, in 2013, the ‘Law of Protecting Society from Terrorist Acts’ of 2006 was amended. The law now permits the judiciary to revoke citizenship of individuals guilty of terrorist acts, but first after the approval of the king. The opportunities to re-obtain the Bahraini citizenship are minimal. The Citizenship Act highlights that re-obtainment can only happen by a decree from the king. However, there have been cases of legal appeals against decisions of citizenship revocation, but there are to this date no reports of anyone who has succeeded in re-obtaining a revoked citizenship (see, e.g., Alwasat 2017).

Thus, today, three authorities in Bahrain have the power to revoke citizenship. These are the king, the Ministry of Interior, and the courts. The three authorities have within a period of less than five years, dating from November 2012 till April 2017, issued more than 400 withdrawals of citizenship in total.¹³ The king has revoked four citizenship, while the Ministry reportedly is responsible for 104 revocations.¹⁴ Bahraini courts have issued the remaining – around 300 – citizenship revocations. Who are stripped of their citizenship, and

¹³ The number of citizenship revocations is on the rise, but the exact number as of the end of April 2017 ought to be something around 400. According to numbers received from BIRD and ADHRB, the total number was 350 by the end of 2016. This increased after 21 citizenship revocations were issued by four separate court orders during one week in March and after 36 revocations were issued on a single day in April (!), among other incidents in 2017 (BCHR 2017b: Tarif 2017b). A Bahraini NGO reports that the total number now exceeds 410 (Salam 2017).

¹⁴ However, an assessment of the original legal documents of the revocation decrees (as found at <http://www.legalaffairs.gov.bh/>) that are reportedly issued by the Ministry (according to Bahrain News Agency), shows that the documents are signed by the king, the prime minister and the minister of interior. Thus, perhaps, in practice the king approves the revocations by the Ministry, in similarity to what the law requires in cases of revocations by court orders.

on which grounds these decisions are made, are examined on the next pages. The politics of citizenship revocations reflect whom the authorities deem as unwelcome as members of the state. At the same time as the policy of exclusion is taking place, the authorities are pursuing a policy of inclusion, in which thousands have been naturalised. The latter is discussed in section 5.2.3 in order to catch the whole spectrum on the extent of citizenship.

5.2.1 Who are excluded?

On 6 November 2012, 31 individuals had their citizenship revoked. These revocations were the first of its kind since the outset of the 14 February movement in 2011. Since then, at least 35 similar incidents have taken place, resulting in more than a tenfold increase in number of revocations. The 31 citizenship revocations in 2012 were by order from the Ministry of Interior (2012).¹⁵ Some of those who had their citizenship revoked, were former parliamentarians in Bahrain, such as brothers Jawad and Jalal Fairouz. They were delegates of the oppositional – and now dissolved – Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society less than two years prior to the revocation order. Another was Abdulhadi Khalaf, whom I interviewed. He was member of the Bahraini parliament in the 1970s during its first short period before it was dissolved (the parliament was first reinstalled in the 2000s). From exile, he continues his engagement in the situation in Bahrain, including by producing academic papers about the country. Along with ex-MPs, there were human rights defenders such as lawyer Taymour Karimi. According to UN Special Rapporteurs, the revocations “may be directly related to these persons’ work for the defence and promotion of human rights in Bahrain” (UN OHCHR 2012a).¹⁶

The revocations of citizenship were not something new post-2011. As Khalaf noted, the authorities instead revived “an old policy.” Khalaf experienced it in 1978 when he was revoked his citizenship. The same happened to political activist Saeed Al-Shehabi in 1981. Shia cleric Sheikh Hussain Al-Najati had his citizenship revoked just before the outset of the

¹⁵ Critics highlight that the 2012 revocations by the Ministry of Interior were themselves unlawful because the Ministry was granted the power to revoke citizenship for the first time in the 2014 amendment of the Citizenship Act.

¹⁶ These UN Special Rapporteurs are: Frank La Rue, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Maina Kiai, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Heiner Bielefeldt, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; and Margaret Sekaggya, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

2011-uprising: in September 2010 (only to be granted it back two months later by a royal decree). Both Al-Shehabi and Al-Najati were on the same 2012-list as Khalaf (BCHR 2014: 4). In addition, there were two Shia clerics along Al-Najati on the list (Al-Mosawi 2012). “The majority of the published names are reportedly Shiite political activists,” according to the UN Special Rapporteurs (UN OHCHR 2012a). Furthermore, many of them are Shia Bahrainis with Iranian origin, so-called ‘Ajeem.’ That included ex-MPs Jawad and Jalal Fairouz and 12 from the ‘Karimi’ neighbourhood in the city of al-Muharraq (Al-Mosawi 2012). Thus, besides that it was solely Shias who were affected by the 2012-revocations, it appears that the Ajeem were particularly targeted. Only one woman was affected by the citizenship revocations in 2012. In the years after 2012, all those excluded through the mechanism of citizenship revocation are men.

As Khalaf noted, “[w]hile revocation of citizenship occurred in the past, it was not a part of the regime’s ordinary repertoire of repression.” After a break in 2013, 21 individuals in total had their citizenship revoked in 2014 by three separate court orders. According to BIRD, these citizenship “were stripped from ordinary individuals and not prominent opposition members, signalling a significant increase in oppressive tactics.” The 21 individuals were reportedly Shias (MacDonald 2014). However, it is in the last two years that the instrument of citizenship revocation has been applied most extensively – with 2017 as an apparently third year.¹⁷ 208 and 90 revocations took place in 2015 and 2016, respectively. Most of these, 221 during the two years, followed trials (in contrast to the practice of ministerial orders) and were thus issued by Bahraini courts based on terrorism charges. For example, on 11 June 2015, 56 Bahraini nationals were stripped of their citizenship in the same court case. 27 of them were students, and nine were below the age of 18. Furthermore, 41 of them were from Bani Jamra, an exclusive Shia village (BIRD 2016: 6). Earlier, on 26 February 2015, three Shias had their citizenship revoked. They were simultaneously sentenced to death. On 15 January 2017, the three – who were effectively stateless – were executed.¹⁸ One of them was reportedly illiterate, another a schoolteacher, and the third a 21 year-old youth (ADHRB, BIRD, BCHR and ECDHR 2017) (their case is further examined on page 62-63). These examples serve as alarming illustrations of the denaturalisation of ordinary Bahraini Shias.

¹⁷ As a comparison to the number in 2014 and a proof on the increased use of citizenship revocations, 21 individuals had their citizenship revoked during only one week in March 2017 (BCHR 2017b).

¹⁸ These executions were the first in Bahrain since 2010 when a Bangladeshi was executed, while they were the first against Bahrainis since 1996 (ADHRB, BIRD, BCHR and ECDHR 2017).

A noteworthy instance of citizenship revocations happened on 31 January 2015. As the most extensive incident to this date, 72 individuals had their citizenship revoked by a single decree by the Ministry of Interior (2015). Included were three of whom I interviewed. Ebrahim Al-Aradi summarised who were on that list:

“I found my name on the list of 72 Bahrainis stripped of their citizenship. They had mixed our names – among us were authors, journalists, and religious scholars – with names of individuals fighting for Daesh [ISIS], to deceive the international community that the government revoked the citizenship of all those because they are terrorists.”

As Al-Aradi noted, on the list were Bahrainis who had joined ISIS and Al-Qaida. Some of them had appeared on videos and officially declared their affiliation to ISIS and threatened Bahraini authorities. For example, one – identified as Salman Turki, who was number 35 on the list – said in a video that “we will return to Bahrain not with our passports, but with our weapons” (Bahrain Mirror 2015a). Another – Abdulaziz Al-Jowder, number 41 on the list – carried out a suicide attack in Iraq on ISIS’ behalf, as proclaimed by the terrorist organisation the same month the revocations were issued (Bahrain Mirror 2015b).¹⁹ The names of 20 ISIS and Al-Qaida suspects were mixed with around 50 peaceful activists, as Alwadaei wrote in an op-ed in the Guardian. The op-ed was published shortly after his citizenship was revoked and entitled ‘We are human rights defenders, but Bahrain says we’re terrorists.’ “The message has never been clearer,” Alwadaei highlighted, “the government of Bahrain views us, who advocate for democracy, human rights and change in Bahrain, as equals to the Jihadi-terrorists of Isis” (Alwadaei 2015).

Besides the orders of September 2012 and January 2015, the third – and so far last – instance of citizenship revocation by the Ministry of Interior took place on 20 June 2016. One was stripped of his citizenship: Sheikh Issa Qassim, Bahrain’s most prominent and senior Shia cleric. Research professor and Middle East expert, Emile Nakhleh, wrote in this regard: “this respected Shia cleric has always called for non-violent resistance and has abhorred the confrontational tactics that some hotheaded protesters have employed in the past” (Nakhleh

¹⁹ As recent as one year before the 2015 revocations, observers had noted that ISIS followers in Bahrain were subjected to almost no prosecution from the government, in contrast to the government’s stance towards peaceful activists (Shehabi 2014).

2016). The citizenship revocation of Sheikh Qassim was reportedly followed with a 72-hour deportation order (ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2017: 88). Others had earlier faced forced deportation after having their citizenship revoked. This means that Bahraini authorities exclude them totally – physically – from the country by expulsion. For example, this was the case of lawyer Taymour Karimi and at least five others during the first half-year of 2016 (HRW 2016). However, Sheikh Qassim remains till this date in the country in a turbulent situation. Protestors have since the announcement of the Ministerial order in June 2016 staged an on-going sit-in in front of his house. Furthermore, he is now being tried for charges of money laundering, in which a verdict is expected soon (ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR 2017: 88).

The European Parliament highlighted in a resolution in July 2016 the citizenship revocations in Bahrain, including the recent denaturalisation of Sheikh Qassim. They called on Bahraini authorities “to end any discrimination against the Shia population.” As noted by several sources, the overwhelming majority of the approximately 400 individuals stripped of their citizenship are Shias. According to ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR (2017: 56), “As many as 292 of those [more than 330 who they had reported as of January 2017] who have had their citizenship revoked are members of the country’s marginalized Shia majority.” That is almost nine out of ten. Moreover, revocations are still issued. So far this year, Bahraini courts have stripped nationals of citizenship on a monthly basis since February. There were at least two revocations in February, 21 in March and 36 in April (Tarif 2017a; BCHR 2017b; Tarif 2017b). All of them are Shia Bahrainis. Alwadaei commented on the number, saying:

“We talk about over 350 cases post-2012, which is massive if you take into consideration the per capita and the size of the Bahrain in itself. [It] is not happening in any way outside, even within the Gulf region it is not happening in that scale. All of us will be stateless if we do not have another citizenship.”

The majority of those stripped of their citizenship, both those in exile and almost all those still inside Bahrain, end up stateless. Of those I interviewed, only Abdulhadi Khalaf had dual citizenship (which – after the revocation of the Bahraini citizenship – is reduced to only the Swedish citizenship). The more than 400 cases is massive when taking into consideration the population of Bahrain at 1,4 million, in which less than the half holds Bahraini citizenship

(Al-Alawi 2017b). The rest of the population are mostly migrant workers, but also reportedly a stateless group who have lived in Bahrain for decades. The individuals who end up stateless as a result of citizenship revocations are thus added to 2000 stateless families which already live in Bahrain, according to an estimation from 2008. Although many of these families are eligible to obtain citizenship according to existing laws, the authorities have denied them it since Bahrain's independence in 1971. The reason is believed to be "to keep the demographic balance in favour of the Sunni against the Shiite population" (BCHR 2014: 5). The last case can further shed light on the exclusionary policies of the state, which appear to specifically target Shia Bahrainis and political activists. Although the latter is an interesting case, this chapter focuses on the politics of citizenship revocations. Why the authorities are excluding citizens by the mechanism of citizenship revocation is discussed in the next section.

5.2.2 Why are they excluded?

To understand why the authorities in Bahrain are defining the extent of citizenship the way they do – through excluding and revoking nationals from citizenship, an examination of their justification follows. The constitution of Bahrain (article 17) states that

“A person inherently enjoying his Bahraini nationality cannot be stripped of his nationality except in case of treason, and such other cases as prescribed by law.”

Treason is thus the declared reason of citizenship revocation according to the constitution. However, in the last years, other laws which regulate this issue have been expanded. In each of the decrees by the Ministry of Interior and the king, in which 108 individuals have been stripped of their citizenship, the Citizenship Act of 1963 is mentioned. More concrete, reference is made to article 10 (c), which was amended in 2014. Clause c states that citizenship can be revoked of a Bahraini national

“if he causes damage to the interest of the state or take action contrary to the duty of loyalty to it.”

In some decrees, there is only a reference to the law, followed by the names of those stripped of their citizenship. For example, this was the case of the 31 revocations in 2012. However, in

the statement concerning 72 individuals who had their citizenship revoked in 2015, the Ministry of Interior (2015) had additionally listed ten accusations. Among these were (1) Defaming the image of the regime, inciting against the regime and spreading false news to hinder the rules of the constitution; (2) Carrying out a series of explosions so as to subvert homeland security and terrorise citizens; (3) Inciting and advocating regime change through illegal means; and (4) Belonging to terrorist groups fighting abroad. Which of these accusations were applied on who of the 72 individuals, was not announced. Abdulemam commented on this as follows:

“They provided a list of – what they call – “the acts” that we did so our citizenship deserved to be revoked. But it does not say that I as Ali Abdulemam did this and this. No, “72 did this”. It is a general statement that ‘you are acting against the national security,’ ‘you are involved in an arm movement’. I do not know which of these allegations are applied on me.”

For Abdulemam, it is clear that the real reason is that he is “active in the exile for the pro-democracy movement,” as he said. He believes the government uses citizenship revocation “as a weapon to punish the opposition.” Al-Arabi agrees with this view. He believes he was targeted because he practised his duty to save injured protestors and because he spoke to international media about the human rights situation in Bahrain. According to Abdulemam, the government wants to “send a message to others that do not call or go against the government loudly because it might take the same consequences as Ali got or others got.” When I asked Al-Arabi if he had received any formal personal letter on the decision of citizenship revocation after the official announcement in 2015, he answered “No” and explained:

“Till this day – and please note this in your research – I ask: why did you revoke my citizenship? I want from the ruling authorities the reason. What is the reason for that you revoked the citizenship of a Bahraini doctor and citizen who is abroad, who defends his country, who does not have a criminal record – in contrast, we tried to help everyone, and to deliver the voice of rights, and to treat the injured. What is the reason? They will never give the reason, because it is an act of reprisal.”

Al-Arabi believed the authorities revoked the citizenship of Sheikh Issa Qassim in retaliation for peaceful activism too. The Ministry of Interior (2016), on the other hand, justified the decision with stating that Sheikh Qassim “encouraged sectarianism and violence.” They claimed that he had “established organizations that follow an external religious political authority” and contributed to undermine “the rights of the people and the rule of law.” These accusations are refused by Professor Nakhleh, who has followed the situation in Bahrain for a long time. He writes in an article in LobeLog:

“Reading the charges in the government’s citizenship revocation statement is baffling to those who have followed Sheikh Isa Qasim’s peaceful activism on behalf of human rights, democracy, and inclusion. He has always promoted reconciliation between the Shia majority and the Sunni minority under the al-Khalifa rule.” (Nakhleh 2016)

The European Parliament supports the views expressed by Nakhleh and those stripped of their citizenship. In a resolution on Bahrain in July 2016, the Parliament stated “the Bahraini authorities continue to use revocation of citizenship as a means of political repression, culminating in the recent denaturalisation of cleric Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassim.” Bahraini courts are certainly included in this description by the European Parliament. The courts, which have issued around 300 citizenship revocations as of April 2017, base their decisions on terrorism charges. The 2013 amendment of the ‘Law of Protecting Society from Terrorist Acts’ of 2006 introduced in article 24 that citizenship can be revoked of those “sentenced for crimes according to article 5 to 9, and 12, and 17.” That includes “Whoever promotes or approves, in any way, any act of crime committed for a terrorist purpose” (article 12).

Bahrain’s anti-terrorism legislation has been internationally criticized. Its punishments include life imprisonment and death penalty. Firstly, its regulations and definition of “terrorism” are criticized for being vague. For example, according to article 1, terrorism could be to “obstruct public authorities ... from doing their work” and to “harm national unity.” Based on this, BCHR (2014: 3-4) states that the law “lacks precision which allows the government to liberally apply it in prosecuting its critics and generally limiting basic freedoms such as the freedom of expression, assembly and association.” Secondly, the application of the anti-terrorism law is at alarming rates – which signify that something is abnormal. In 2013, BCHR (2014: 5) calculated that there was one terrorism case every ten

days on average. This is a very high number for a country with a small population such as Bahrain. Human rights defenders, political leaders, peaceful protestors, and even children are among those tried under this law. The nine juveniles among the 56 who were stripped of their citizenship on terrorism charges on 11 June 2015 serve as an example (BIRD 2016: 6). The BCHR (2014: 3) writes that they observe a pattern “which clearly shows the targeting of a specific religious sect and political orientation” under the banner of ‘terrorism.’

Finally, where the law is applied, suspects are subjected to torture and other ill-treatment under interrogation. This is documented by Amnesty International (2014b), which further writes that in all terrorism cases they have examined in Bahrain “detainees were never allowed access to their lawyer when interrogated at the CID [Criminal Investigations Directorate] and later their lawyers faced restrictions defending them.” The confessions obtained under such circumstances are often the only “evidence” to sentence the suspects (BCHR 2014: 6), including to revoke their citizenship. The sentences follow unfair trials in cases that are “highly politicized” (HRW 2012). Amnesty (2014b) emphasizes that the law itself empowers the police and Public Prosecution “to act without any restrictions when investigating terrorist acts, putting detainees held in connection with terrorism-related investigations at a high risk of torture and other ill-treatment.” This itself makes the resulting sentences default according to international human rights standards.

Amnesty (2014b) exemplifies the latter with the case of suspects arrested in connection with an alleged explosion in the village of al-Daih in 2014, where police officers had died. Amnesty reports that the suspects – who were accused of terrorism – told their families and lawyers that they were tortured to make confessions. Among the suspects were the three individuals who – besides having their citizenship revoked and ending up stateless – were sentenced to death and executed in January this year, as mentioned on page 56 (see also ADHRB, BIRD, BCHR and ECDHR 2017). One of the defendants, schoolteacher Abbas Al-Samea, had before the execution made public statements through leaked videos from prison. The videos are published on YouTube (see Al-Samea 2015 and Al-Samea 2016). Al-Samea emphasized that he and the other arrested in this case were innocent. He expressed that he and his family were targeted for a long time, and that he was charged with terrorism in retaliation for the family and village he belonged to, which are known for being oppositional. Al-Samea

furthermore spoke about what he was subjected to in – what he called – the “torture centres.” He said:

“The brutal physical and psychological torture was unbearable. My family were threatened, and the situation escalated to a level that even my lawyers were threatened with dismissals and revoking of their [job] license if they withdraw from the court hearings.” (Al-Samea 2016)

The authorities thus exclude and revoke citizenship of Bahraini nationals on accusations of terrorism. However, there are good reasons to doubt the correctness of these charges when they – in many cases, such as the case of Abbas Al-Samea – are based on confessions made under torture and other ill-treatment. While such accusations are clearly expressed in the court cases, the Ministry of Interior appears to base its decrees on the same accusations. For example, this is the impression after reading the ten-point list published in connection with 72 revocations in January 2015, where human rights defenders were named along ISIS suspects. According to the authorities, these people are “caus[ing] damage to the interest of the state or tak[ing] action contrary to the duty of loyalty to it” (Citizenship Act, article 10c). However, as criticized by several human rights groups, the authorities’ understanding of “terrorism” enables them to persecute and prosecute dissidents.

The foregoing signifies that any political threat or challenge directed against the ruler is interpreted as something which “causes damage to the interest of the state.” In this way, the state is understood synonymous with the ruler, and accordingly, disloyalty to the ruler is interpreted as “tak[ing] action contrary to the duty of loyalty to [the state].” Shia citizens appear as the greatest victims of such policies by being particularly suspected. In similarity with the differentiation patterns reported in chapter 4, Bahraini authorities are defining the extent of citizenship on sectarian grounds. Shia nationals, often the political active but not necessary, are those who face arbitrary problems in their access to citizenship. It is them who predominantly are excluded through the mechanism of citizenship revocation. That reflects a concept of citizenship in terms of extent that frequently excludes members of a certain sect. Meanwhile, the authorities’ politics of citizenship are resulting in inclusion of other groups in the Bahraini society.

5.2.3 Who are included?

At the same time as Bahraini nationals are having their citizenship revoked, naturalisation of foreigners is reportedly taking place. The latter – in similarity with the former – is not a new phenomenon, but has arguably increased in the past few years. The Citizenship Act of 1963 (article 6) sets some residency and language requirements for foreigners in order to be eligible for the Bahraini citizenship. However, it also declares that citizenship can be granted to anyone “by order of His Majesty the Governor,” i.e., the king. As a result of the fact that the king’s power to issue citizenship is not restricted by these requirements, foreigners are naturalised in Bahrain before necessary having fulfilled the residency and language requirements (Kinninmont 2012: 18).

The naturalisations are commonly linked to the mass-recruitment of foreign Sunnis to serve in Bahrain’s security sector (as examined in chapter 4). Already in 1998, there was an estimation of around 8000 – 10,000 Sunni families from Jordan, Syria, Pakistan and Yemen who had been given the Bahraini citizenship. Their men were reportedly working in the security services. The families were estimated to represent 40,000 – 50,000 new citizens, which in 1998 were equal to around 13 % of the native population (Al-Jamri 1998). In 2002, in the run-up to Bahrain’s first parliamentary election in decades, 20,000 individuals from the Al-Dawasir tribe in Saudi Arabia were reportedly naturalised. Furthermore, they were reportedly driven to Bahrain in order to cast votes in the election (Gengler 2015: 45). Thus, in addition to be included through gaining access to citizenship, they are rapidly included through obtaining political rights. The Sunni naturalisations are therefore criticized for being political motivated by the Bahraini government to diminish the voices of the Shia majority.

In 2007, data revealed that the population was 42 % higher than expected. That was partly due to 70,000 who had been granted the Bahraini citizenship between 2001 and 2007 (Kinninmont 2012: 18). Notwithstanding, among those 70,000 were also native Bahrainis and their families who returned to Bahrain from exile in 2001 after the king issued a royal amnesty to political opponents (Wehrey 2014: 42). However, in 2011, there was estimated that Bahraini citizens with foreign origin could constitute up to 200,000 or one-third of the total citizenry (Al-Shehabi 2011). All these numbers remain however scholarly estimations because of lack of transparency by the Bahraini government. Although the exact number is unknown, there is no reason to doubt that mass-naturalisation *is* actually taking place in Bahrain.

Furthermore, the naturalisation of foreigners is probably in increase as a consequence of new recruitments of security personnel after the 2011-uprising. For example, 2500 Pakistani recruits joined the Bahraini military during few months in 2011 (Mashal 2011). Critics are accusing Bahraini authorities for “demographic engineering” through the mass-naturalisation. They believe the on-going policy is intended to change the current Shia majority so they – or actually native Bahrainis in general – become a minority in their own land (Kafai and Shehabi 2014). This policy and its political aims were also revealed in the 2006 Bandargate report by the former government adviser Saleh al-Bandar (Louër 2012: 101). One of the critics of the naturalisation policy is Nabeel Rajab, president of BCHR.²⁰ Back in 2014, he had the following comment on citizenship revocations of nine individuals:

“[The authorities] are bringing thousands and thousands of people from abroad and naturalising them, while the indigenous populations' passports are revoked by the minister of the interior or the court.” (MacDonald 2014)

As it appears, the inclusion of new citizens follows the same sectarian lines as Bahrain’s exclusionary policies. It reflects the same patterns as else reported on differentiated citizenship (in chapter 4), where Sunnis are being privileged while Shias are suppressed. “The government has made concerted efforts to erode Bahrain’s Shiite majority, mostly by recruiting foreign-born Sunnis to become citizens and serve in the country’s security forces,” as Freedom House (2017) describes it. Bahraini authorities’ concept of citizenship in terms of extent is best understood when this whole picture is presented. While foreign Sunnis are welcomed as new citizens of the state, native Shias’ access to the Bahraini citizenship is being restricted. What it implies for members of the latter group (and others) to get their citizenship revoked is examined next.

5.3 Content of Citizenship

Content of citizenship concerns the rights provided to citizens of a state. It also considers duties citizens are bound to. This reflects the content of the social contract between the state

²⁰ Nabeel Rajab has been arrested since June 2016. He risk long-term imprisonment on charges related to freedom of expression (ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR. 2017: 21).

and the citizens (Faulks 2000: 7). A core question in this regard is what do each party get and what are they expected to give back. Some have noted that the content – and thus, often, the power – of citizenship is best assessed through studying those who are deprived of citizenship (Butenschøn 2000: 5). The assessment above on why Bahrainis are being excluded through citizenship revocation, signifies which expectations or obligations the authorities have to the citizenry. It signifies, in short, that the authorities demand obedient citizens who are loyal to the rulers. Else, their actions – their political activism in particular – can be deemed as treason, damage to the interest of the state, or even terrorism, which according to Bahraini laws legitimize citizenship revocation. It furthermore showed that the authorities perhaps perceive the whole Shia sect as a threat, leading to the fact that even ordinary individuals – including juveniles - are subjected to harsh sentences and exclusion (more on this perceived threat in the last chapter). This section seeks to assess the content of citizenship in terms of which rights it constitutes of. Which rights do Bahrainis have as citizens, which they lose when their citizenship are revoked?

5.3.1 What are they excluded from?

Firstly, an individual's right to education is affected when his citizenship is revoked. Primary and secondary education are free and compulsory to all citizens in Bahrain, according to article 7 in the constitution. When the individual is no longer recognized as a citizen, he is not legally entitled to the education services provided by the state. This includes state-sponsored scholarships and grants to pursue higher education. The consequences on this area for those stripped of their citizenship are though not fully visible yet, because the youths who are stripped of their citizenship are imprisoned. For example, as mentioned earlier, 27 students and nine juveniles were stripped of their citizenship on 11 June 2015. One was sentenced to three years, while the rest received ten years imprisonment or more (BIRD 2016). As what is generally reported on imprisoned school age individuals – or boys, as they usually are – their educational opportunities are restricted. Many of them are deprived of education in prison (this signifies another pattern of discrimination with regard to education). For imprisoned school age boys who are stripped of their citizenship, the situation is truly more severe as the constitutional right to education does not include them anymore. In addition, most of them – if not all – will be grown men when they complete their sentences. The consequences have to

wait to be visible, but Bahrain will likely get a bunch of stateless men with low education as a result of the current policies of citizenship revocation.

Secondly, people stripped of their citizenship face problems in the job market. Since they are no longer citizens, they have to apply for a job license like migrant workers. To get a job license in Bahrain, you need an employer who can sponsor you (BCHR 2014: 6).

Accordingly, many were dismissed right after getting their citizenship revoked. For example, it took only one week from stripping lawyer Taymour Karimi of his citizenship to he received the news of “we also have to withdraw your licence in practicing as a lawyer” (Journeyman 2015). Another example is fisherman Ismaeel Khalil Darwish, who was stripped of his citizenship in 2012 along with Karimi. Although he does not have a licence to continue in his profession, he continues to work but is occasionally stopped by the coast guard. The coast guard interrogates Darwish for several hours and sometimes takes his fish (BCHR 2014: 11). A third example is academic Masood Jahrami, who was revoked his citizenship in January 2015. Two weeks after the revocation, the university administration told Jahrami they are forced to fire him (Journeyman 2015). These individuals face problems getting reemployed because few employers want to sponsor stateless individuals. Those serving sentences inside prison will probably face the same difficulties in employment when they are released. Besides that their educational opportunities are minimal, the prospects for this group in the job market are not optimistic.

Thirdly, those who are revoked their citizenship face issues with simply being residents in Bahrain. As non-citizens, they have to apply for a residence permit in their own homeland. However, they cannot fill such an application because they do not have any identification documents. After the citizenship revocation, they were required to hand in all identification papers such as passports and national ID-cards to the Immigration Office (Amnesty 2014a). They therefore end up as “illegal residents” in Bahrain. (This furthermore makes it difficult to apply for a job licence.) Many have been forcibly deported, while others risk the same fate. For example, Karimi and Jahrami were deported in 2016 after receiving summons from Public Prosecution that they violated Bahrain’s Immigration and Residency law. Others such as Darwish must live with the fear of expulsion at any time (HRW 2016; Amnesty 2016a and 2016b). For those currently serving in Bahraini prisons, the fate may be to face deportation shortly after completing their sentences and being released. Those who have been deported

report that they get three destination options: Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey (Bahrain Mirror 2016).

Fourthly, the right to movement and travel are restricted for those who are stripped of their citizenship. Those who reside inside Bahrain (although “illegally,” according to the authorities) have to avoid any checkpoints because they lack identification documents. The increased number of checkpoints in the aftermath of the 2011-uprising makes the situation more severe for this group (and certainly for others because the checkpoints function as obstacles in the ways). There are cases of people arrested from checkpoints because they lack identification papers (Amnesty 2014a). Furthermore, the opportunities to legally travel abroad are absent without a passport. Similarly, the opportunities to escape from Bahrain are strictly restricted because Bahrain is an island state with only a causeway linking it to the neighbouring Saudi Arabia. Thus, as a non-citizen in Bahrain without identification papers, you face problems with simply moving around. At the same time, the risk of forced deportation hangs over your head. The latter is, by the way, probably the only (legal) way for an individual revoked of his citizenship to get out of the country – though it will be a one-way ticket without any prospect of returning back.

Those deprived of their Bahraini citizenship in exile also experience difficulties in movement and travel. As mentioned earlier, most of them end up stateless. To be able to travel, the country they live in must provide for them identification documents, because their Bahraini passports are no longer valid. However, they are still not able to travel to Bahrain and are thus kept away from their families there. For example, Khalaf – although he holds the Swedish citizenship – notes that

“I cannot visit my family in Bahrain including my 94-years old mother. In similarity with [other Bahrainis whose citizenship have been revoked], I became a foreigner in the eyes of Bahraini authorities.”

Furthermore, Al-Aradi said that Bahraini authorities threatened them with publishing their names on the INTERPOL wanted list. “Fortunately, the INTERPOL does not deal with political issues,” Al-Aradi stressed. However, he emphasized that they are repeatedly stopped and questioned in airports based on the accusations Bahraini authorities have announced

against them. Although it is perceived as harassment, they are often able to pursue their journey. However, that does not apply to journeys made to countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The six member states often back each other's decisions. They have their own Interpol called GCCPOL, and an agreement that states that anyone who has committed a "crime" in one GCC country can be arrested by the authorities in any of the other countries (Toumi 2014). Khalaf reported in this regard that

“[I have to] adjust my personal and professional life to the new situation of not carrying a valid Bahraini passport and facing the constraints on my movement, particularly in the GCC region, due to being declared “a security risk.”

This has implications for Khalaf's academic freedom and his scholarly research. He is now unable to conduct fieldwork in the region. He is neither able to participate in regional conferences nor have direct contact with colleagues in the GCC region and perhaps other countries in the Middle East (Committee on Academic Freedom 2012). The same implications likely apply to other academics who had their citizenship revoked, for example Masood Jahrami. Jahrami even has to find a new place to be employed as an academic as a result of the citizenship revocation and deportation.

Moreover, as a fifth point, those who lose their citizenship tend to lose the right to control real estates and other assets they own (BCHR 2014: 6). For example, Karimi said that they are not able to buy land or sell the ones they have. Furthermore, he said, the Central Bank of Bahrain sent a letter to all banks with the order to close any accounts under the name of individuals stripped of their citizenship (Journeyman 2015). In this regard, Abdulemam noted the following:

“My retirement package is stolen by the government since my citizenship was revoked. Under my son's bank account, I had put an amount of money for him; I cannot move it or do anything on it because my citizenship is revoked.”

Khalaf also experiences a similar issue. “Our family house, where my mother lives, is in my name. It is considered, now, a ‘house of a foreigner,’” he said. Accordingly, Khalaf cannot enjoy subsidies which citizens are entitled to. “This means that my mother's bills for

electricity and water supplies and other municipal services have been increased following the lifting of government subsidies on non-citizens,” Khalaf explained.

Sixthly, the loss of the Bahraini citizenship impacts the right to health care for individuals residing in Bahrain. Public hospitals offer free health services to citizens. For those stripped of their citizenship, even visiting private clinics may be difficult because they lack identification documents and may not be able to cover the expenses. Finally, they also lose the right to receive state-subsidized social benefits (BCHR 2014: 6). The Bahraini government offers financial support to low-income inhabitants who have Bahraini citizenship. Therefore, those who lose the citizenship can no longer receive such benefits (ADHRB, BCHR, and BIRD 2015b: 34). This degrades the economic situation of an already disadvantaged group. One example of such social benefits is state housing. Bahrainis – the Shias in particular – wait up to decades for their housing applications to be granted. More than 50,000 wait for housing, while the available units are distributed disproportionately in which Shia citizens tend to be underprioritized (Siperco 2010; ADHRB, BCHR, and BIRD 2015b: 32-34). When their citizenship are revoked, Bahrainis have to give up their housing aspirations once and for all.

The seven points above illustrate the rights citizens have and which are deprived of them in case of citizenship revocation. Alwadaei summarized the implications, in particular for those living in Bahrain:

“If someone got his citizenship revoked, it means he no longer exists within any system. They are no longer treated as citizens. Their bank accounts will be closed. They have no access to public health. They will be dismissed from their jobs. They will be treated as someone who are illegally residing in the country. If they have a state house given by the council, this will be taken away from them as well.”

Alwadaei stressed the fact that “the implications are not only for the individuals. It goes far beyond to their entire family, because any benefits your family receives from the state will be immediately stopped.” In the next section, the implications for family members of those stripped of their citizenship are further examined. It sheds light on how the content of

citizenship can be depending on the legal statuses of other family members, in particular if that family member is your father.

5.3.2 Implications for their Families

The most obvious implication for families, which were mentioned by most of the interviewees, is the citizenship rights of newborns. Alwadaei, Abdulemam, and Al-Aradi have children born in the last years who have no right to obtain the Bahraini citizenship because their fathers do not own it anymore. The Bahraini citizenship is given to children through descent, in which the father must be a Bahraini citizen, according to the Citizenship Act (article 4). Alwadaei emphasized the fact that “mothers cannot forward the citizenship to her children – it can only happen through the father. This is in itself a discrimination within the law.” So although those who have their citizenship revoked are married to Bahraini women, it has nothing to say for the legal statuses of their newborns; the husbands are no longer Bahraini citizens, consequently, their newborns cannot be either. This gender discrimination within the law was highlighted in the first-cycle and second-cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Bahrain. The government pledged to correct this inequality. Through royal decrees, some children of Bahraini mothers and foreign fathers have been provided the Bahraini citizenship (Toumi 2011). However, the legal framework remains the same, resulting in lack of Bahraini citizenship for children born after their fathers were revoked the citizenship.

Alwadaei, who was stripped of his citizenship in 2015, said “the same year I had my first child and he has no right to obtain the Bahraini citizenship.” Alwadaei stressed that the case is the same for others in exile as well as those inside Bahrain. Their children end up stateless unless “the state which they live in provide citizenship for stateless or for newborn children.” He finds that the Bahraini government is performing a “collective punishment on the entire family” of the individual stripped of his citizenship. Abdulemam, who in similarity with Alwadaei is a political refugee in the UK, agreed on this point. When I interviewed him in February 2017, he said:

“The revoking of citizenship will not stop at me as a person. It will go up after my kids and my family. My wife, for example, is pregnant and is supposed to deliver within

one month. The baby will not have his citizenship as a Bahraini and he will not have a citizenship here in the UK. So this will cause some problems for us.”

The case is the same for Al-Aradi. He has a daughter who is affected by the fact that he is no longer recognized as a Bahraini citizen. He said, “It is very sad when you see your daughter grows up and it is her right to own a citizenship. It is her right to be in her country.” He wondered: “What is the fault of this little girl so she has to be punished?” From Al-Aradi’s point of view, the biggest problem is this coming generation without the Bahraini citizenship. “Those are the greatest victims,” Al-Aradi stressed, “our children who are born stateless, without a Bahraini citizenship.” This generation without the Bahraini citizenship signifies that the number of excluded individuals as a result of citizenship revocations is higher than the approximately 400 who have been stripped of their citizenship since 2012. The number greatly exceeds 400 when their children born after the revocation are included.

For the stateless children inside Bahrain, the implications are almost as those their fathers have to experience as non-citizens in the country. The parents report difficulties getting identification documents for their children. This even includes birth certificates (BCHR 2017a: 8-10). Furthermore, they do not have free access to health care. This has resulted in newborns not receiving the ordinary vaccinations provided to others. Without identification documents, they additionally cannot apply for public schools (BCHR 2017a: 11). Simply, all the rights which are deprived of individuals affected by citizenship revocations, will apply to their children. When these children grow up, they may face problems in employment, movement, and even residency in Bahrain. Alwadaei stressed the fact that “this is a very early generation. You talk about 2012 when this began, but the consequences will last for many longer years.”

For individuals who were deported or who managed to flee the country beforehand, their families often go into self-imposed exile to live with their husbands or fathers. However, to travel out of Bahrain may be problematic for those family members. There have been incidents where, for example, wives have been held at airports and interrogated based on their husbands’ activities. That happened to Alwadaei’s wife, who was visiting family in Bahrain with their infant son, in October 2016. His wife received threats, including from an officer who told her “Deliver this message to your husband – I will get him” (HRW 2017). The

Bahraini embassy in London justified the incident with stating that the interrogation “should be taken in context with the criminal history of her husband supporting terrorist acts” (Bahrain Embassy 2016). This illustrates how family members of political activists are subjected to reprisals by Bahraini authorities for the activities of their relatives. As Alwadaei said, “Usually, if they cannot get to you, they go after your family.” For others, simply to travel out in order to reunite with their husbands and fathers are impossible. That is the case of families with stateless children inside Bahrain. Without identification documents, the children and usually their mothers must remain in Bahrain (BCHR 2017a: 8-11). In such cases, the families are forced to live separated.

To sum up what the examination of Bahrain’s politics of citizenship revocations illustrates about content of citizenship, the conclusion is twofold. On the one hand, the examination reflects the variety of rights and services offered exclusively to citizens. That includes the rights to (1) education, (2) employment, (3) residency, (4) movement, (5) property, (6) health care, and (7) social benefits. On the other hand, since these rights are entitled to only citizens, individuals stripped of their citizenship are deprived of these rights. The message from the authorities seems to be: “we give you citizenship and provide you with rights in an expectation of loyalty and obedience to the ruler in exchange.” When a national is regarded as disloyal, he is accordingly deprived of these rights by the means of citizenship revocation. Furthermore, even their newborn children are deprived of these rights, because these children are not entitled to the Bahraini citizenship as their fathers are no longer Bahraini citizens.

The examination above supports the analysis in chapter 4 and further shed light on differentiated citizenship in Bahrain. Bahrain is not only having a majority population which is *marginalized* in several arenas; there is also an increasing group within this majority which is totally *banned* from citizens’ rights and state services as a consequence of the politics of citizenship revocations.

5.4 Depth of Citizenship

The third dimension of citizenship concerns the “depthness” of the authorities’ conception of citizenship. What is understood with citizenship? Which expectations do the authorities have

to those who hold the citizenship? (Faulks 2000: 7-11) This dimension considers the role of citizens in the society as defined by the state. It deals with the opportunities and constraints to participate in the society, including through political activism, and how citizenship is used to regulate this issue (Meijer and Butenschøn 2017: 11). Based on the examination above of Bahrain's politics of citizenship revocations, the following assesses which signals Bahraini authorities are sending about their conception of citizenship and their perception of the role of citizens in society. The impressions people who have been stripped of their citizenship have in this regard are included in the assessment.

5.4.1 Citizenship and the Role of Citizens

A clear signal sent by the authorities, is that the authorities expect citizens to be loyal to the ruler. Else the citizen can expect to be deprived of his or her rights. The authorities' policies signify that they have minimal tolerance on oppositional political activism that might represent a threat to the ruler's grip on power. The suspicion of who represents a security threat does not only target prominent political activists, but also ordinary individuals who are associated with a family, a village or a sect that is known as being oppositional. The Shia sect seems to be under such suspicion in Bahrain. The latter can explain why members of the Shia sect are particularly targeted by the state's exclusionary policies. (The perception of Shias as a security threat is further discussed in the last chapter).

The deprivation of rights from people indicates that the authorities perceive these rights as privileges, which they can bestow on those who are loyal according to their perspective, while deprive them of those who they perceive as disloyal. In this way, citizenship functions as a mechanism of differentiation between people. Al-Arabi emphasized that "the 14 February uprising occurred precisely to return citizenship rights to its owners," whom he means are the citizens rather than the rulers. Thus, from the perspective of many (former) citizens, the Bahraini citizenship does not live up to their expectation of citizenship as a provider of the rights which they would have consent to in a social contract. He explained:

“The Bahraini citizenship contains a set of rights. It represents a charter of rights. Even when I had the Bahraini citizenship, I did not enjoy my rights. Now the picture is clear: We are taking your citizenship [and accordingly your rights].”

The authorities' treatment of citizenship as a mechanism in their hand, is further exemplified in the "procedures" of citizenship revocation. For example, Al-Aradi explained how the news of citizenship revocation "came as we were living in a jungle." He and the other interviewees said they received no alerts or warnings before the ministerial revocation of their citizenship. Alwadaei, for example, called it "a lottery." He said it is "like you are reading a random message in WhatsApp and you find out about it like everyone else." He further said that those affected by the revocations cannot do much about it: "It was just posted by the Ministry of Interior. This was the order and finish." This is reflected in the restricted opportunities to revise the decisions on citizenship revocation. Although some people have legally appealed against such decisions, none have to this date managed to re-obtain their revoked citizenship (see, e.g., Alwasat 2017). These "procedures" of citizenship revocation reflect the authorities' relation to people's rights. Khalaf stressed that the Bahraini authorities signify with their policies that the Bahraini citizenship is a "gift," a so-called "makrama," which they can provide and deprive of whom they want, when they want. He said:

“[The] incidents of collective naturalization, along with cases of collective revocation of citizenship, resemble an official declaration of the idea that the ruling [family does] not consider citizenship to be a right for citizens ..., but rather they consider it a gift that they bestow upon the people. The ruling family reserves the right to grant or revoke this gift at any time.” (Khalaf 2012)

The case of Doctor Al-Aradi serves as an example. As he noted, if Bahrain was a state which respected its citizens, the authorities would have honoured him for treating the injured during the unrest in 2011. Instead, he said, "the regime of Al-Khalifa punished me with stripping my citizenship." Khalaf expressed that such cases illustrate the fact that the authorities "do not consider citizenship as a birthright." Instead, it shows that they "consider revocation of citizenship or passports as one of their tools to control their subjects," including people such as Al-Aradi who is now stateless. Khalaf highlighted that "Citizenship, whether seen as a formal identification instrument, as a marker of political belonging, or a social identity, is contingent on the discretion of the ruler." In this way, citizenship functions as a political tool in the hand of the ruler to control the inhabitants under its jurisdiction.

The authorities' conceptualizing of citizenship is to a large extent formed by the idea that it is a "makrama," a gift or a privilege, which is bestowed on individuals who are believed to be loyal in exchange. However, Abdulemam emphasized in this regard, "the citizenship is not about paper. It is about your identity, where you belong to." When I asked him what he thinks is withdrawn from a Bahraini when his citizenship is revoked, he answered:

"They are trying to tell you that we own your identity and we have the authority or ability to take your identity. I think we Bahrainis should not recognise this decree or the decision on revoking our citizenship because we must not give this ruler the feeling that he owns us or can give us our identity or remove it at any time he wants."

Abdulemam explained that his roots in Bahrain date many centuries. He said his family has lived in the country for more than 800 years, and is well-known in Bahrain as "Al-Musaoaj." He narrated that his "grand grand grand-family" is buried in Nabih Saleh island, an island in the northeast coast of Bahrain. He compared his roots with those of Al-Khalifa, which dates no more than 200-300 years. He emphasized, "I am not going to give someone who came a couple of hundred years ago [the decision] to tell me I am a Bahraini or not a Bahraini." Al-Aradi expressed similar views. He said:

"I was stripped the citizenship, but they did not strip me the breath of my country and its desert. They did not strip me of my memories in Bahrain. They did not strip me of my origin and roots in Bahrain. They did not strip me of my people's love and trust."

However, despite people's feelings in this regard, all the interviewees agreed that there are practical consequences of losing the Bahraini citizenship (as the assessment of the content of citizenship illustrated). In practice, it is the Bahraini authorities which control an individual's legal status by their policies on citizenship. Thus, it is their conception of the phenomenon which rules. The result of this conception is the fact that those who are revoked of their citizenship are "treated as non-existing persons in the state," as noted by Alwadaei. Al-Aradi called the citizenship revocation a "civil execution" of an individual. "You made no existence for him in the country he is in," he stressed. So, although citizens' rights are being violated in the first place, Al-Aradi said, "now even the right to travel and move is prohibited" for the

stateless individual. Al-Aradi stressed the fact that the stateless individual “has no rights in life. It is like you have executed him civilly. It is a civil execution.”

What the above illustrates about the depth of citizenship in Bahrain, is that the authorities have some expectations for citizens, predominantly centred around the idea of loyalty to the ruler. Those stripped of their citizenship have, according to the authorities, not fulfilled this expectation of the role of citizen as an obedient and loyal subject of the state. Oppositional political activism appears to be evidence of “disloyalty” according to the authorities, as the assessment of Bahrain’s politics of citizenship signifies. The citizenship revocations along with naturalisation of other groups illustrate that the ruling elite perceives citizenship as a “gift”. It employs it as a political tool to honour supporters and punish dissidents. In Bahrain, you can simply end up as “non-existent” if you do not live up to the state’s expectations as set forth in its conception of citizenship. “Bahrainis who dare speak out for change now risk not only arbitrary detention and torture but statelessness and deportation to an uncertain future,” as HRW (2014) described it.

5.5 Conclusion

The examination of Bahrain’s politics of citizenship revocations in this chapter shows the fact that there are differences with regard to people’s access to citizenship. The latter is another way in which differentiated citizenship – which was assessed in chapter 4 – is produced. This conclusion is based on the examination of the research question: *How do the politics of citizenship revocations illustrate the authorities’ concept of citizenship in terms of extent, content, and depth of citizenship?*

In terms of extent of citizenship, Bahraini authorities’ perform an exclusionary policy by revoking people of their citizenship. These revocations are based on the suspicion that these individuals are damaging the state’s interests, including by engaging in terrorist acts. An overwhelming majority of those stripped of their citizenship are political activists and members of the Shia sect in Bahrain. These are perceived as “tak[ing] action contrary to the duty of loyalty to [the state]” (the Citizenship Act, article 10c). The target of these groups shows that “loyalty to the state” is understood synonymous with “loyalty to the ruler.” Shias

as a whole are particularly suspected and subjected to citizenship revocation, even though they are not necessary prominent dissidents, but ordinary individuals from separate segments of the state, such as clerics, academics and even juveniles. The latter indicates that Shias are perhaps viewed as a security threat collectively based on their sect background. At the same time as citizenship revocations take place, the Bahraini authorities are naturalising thousands from Sunni-majority countries, many of whom are recruited into the security services. The exclusionary and inclusionary policies, respectively, signify the sectarian nature of the authorities' concept of extent of citizenship. The overall picture shows that an increased number of Shia natives are being excluded by having their citizenship revoked, while Sunni foreigners are included as new citizens of the state.

In terms of content of citizenship, there is a set of rights which citizens are entitled to. Once individuals are deprived of their citizenship, they are also deprived of these rights. These rights include the rights to (1) education, (2) employment, (3) residency, (4) movement, (5) property, (6) health care, and (7) social benefits. These rights and services are given with an expectation of loyalty in exchange. When an individual is regarded as disloyal, he is accordingly deprived of these rights. Even his children born after the decision of citizenship revocation are deprived of these rights. The authorities' concept of citizenship appears thus to be centred on the idea that the state – or more concrete: the ruler – gives citizenship and the related rights and expects to get loyalty in exchange.

In terms of depth of citizenship, the authorities' concept of citizenship is centred on the idea that the role of the citizen is bound by certain limits in order that the citizen does not “take action contrary to the duty of loyalty.” The latter is understood synonymous with the loyalty to the ruler. Accordingly, citizenship is used as a political tool by the authorities to honour supporters and punish the dissidents who are perceived as disloyal. In this way, citizenship is employed as a gift. The next – and last – chapter summaries and further examines several points which were mentioned in this chapter and chapter 4, including the perception of citizenship as a gift.

This chapter ought to contribute to the academic research on statelessness, as those who are revoked their Bahraini citizenship usually become stateless. The assessment on why people are being excluded (in section 5.2.2) and what they are excluded from (section 5.3), in

particular, reflect the causes and consequences of statelessness. In the Bahraini case, the consequence of statelessness is at worst striking people from being citizens to non-existents.

6 THE POLITICS OF CITIZENSHIP IN BAHRAIN

6.1 Differentiated Citizenship

This thesis has sought to shed light on the politics of citizenship in Bahrain by assessing the ways and extent in which differentiated citizenship occurs in the tiny Gulf state. A particular emphasis was put on the state-controlled mechanism of citizenship revocation and the related implication for people's access to citizenship. The empirical analyses prove that citizens are differentially treated in their (1) access to citizenship, as well as in arenas such as (2) the education system, (3) the job market, and in (4) their right to exercise freedom of religion and cultural rights. This is added to the restrictions faced in (5) political participation. These arenas have a fundamental impact on people's lives. To be deprived of rights and marginalized in these arenas imply a severe degradation of one's position and opportunities in the society. The thesis demonstrates the fact that the differentiation patterns follow sectarian lines. Members of the Shia population are the greatest sufferers in the current citizenship hierarchy in Bahrain. However, the religious divide is only one part of the picture. Considerations related to security and power maintenance are also of relevance.

The determining factor for the eruption of the 14 February uprising – namely the long-running systematic discrimination in arenas related to power and wealth – is thus still present in Bahrain more than six years after the uprising. Moreover, the situation has deteriorated on several accounts. The extensive and escalating use of citizenship revocations serves as an evidence. An increasing number of Bahrainis, the majority of whom are Shia, are being totally excluded from citizenship rights. The authorities accuse them of terrorism and damaging state interests, while these accusations are criticized –by those who are affected by the citizenship revocations as well as human rights groups – for being politically motivated. There is also a development towards greater restrictions in the arenas of education, employment, and religious and cultural rights since 2011. This is evident, for example, in the introduction of 'politicalized' interviews for scholarship applicants; the extensive recruitments of foreign workers in sectors where native jobseekers are increasingly rejected;

and the attacks on Shia places of worship and rites. Based on the recent developments, differentiated citizenship in Bahrain is present to an extent not witnessed at any time during the last decades.

The authorities' concept of citizenship differs markedly from the one expressed by citizens. The 2002 constitution was supposed to function as a new social contract between the ruler and the ruled. Promises of a new era of reforms since the turn of the millennium have however resulted in disappointment and misery by citizens who perceive these promises as broken. The government, faced with greater dissidence, responds with excessive use of measures to tackle – what on their part are perceived as – disobedient and disloyal citizens. Calls for equality and respect for human rights are faced with repression and further marginalization of individuals and groups associated with the opposition. At worst, citizenship is revoked and people are totally excluded from citizenship rights. Accusations of a vague character, such as damaging the interest of the state and performing terrorist acts, are brought as justifications for a “deserved” degradation in legal status. Calls for an inclusive citizenship, as citizens expect their state to fulfil, may at worst leave an individual rightless and stateless in his own native country.

The authorities' policies indicate that they perceive citizenship as a gift that they can grant to anyone they want and deprive of anyone they want. After all, they control the state instruments to determine the extent, content and depth of citizenship. The authorities' concept of citizenship in terms of these three dimensions is precisely based on the idea of citizenship as a gift. In this concluding chapter, I further examine such central features of Bahrain's politics of citizenship, which were mentioned in the empirical analyses in this thesis. The analyses were centred on describing differentiated citizenship in Bahrain. In what follows, there is a kind of an attempt to explain this outcome – but it is by no means meant as a comprehensive account of explanations. Instead, I aim to summarise the findings of this study and at the same time elaborate on some theoretical considerations, which were briefly mentioned but not sufficiently addressed in the other chapters.

Therefore, in what follows, I first discuss the idea of citizenship as a gift, which is given to people based on trust and an expected exchange of loyalty. Second, the much-noted issue of sectarianism in Bahrain is examined in light of other possible rationales behind the

differentiation policies, including the perception of Shias as a security threat. Third, the expression of authoritarianism in Bahrain is addressed. Emphasis is placed on how the ruling elite employs a sectarian-based divide and rule strategy in order to maintain power. Finally, I conclude by recalling the implications the citizenship policies have for individuals. In doing so, I aim to defend the thesis title “From Citizen to Non-Existent.”

6.2 Citizenship as a Gift

Citizenship as a “makrama,” a gift the ruler bestows on whom he wants and deprives of whom he want, is used to describe the stance of citizenship in Bahrain (Meijer and Danckaert 2015: 216). Although Bahraini laws regulate citizenship to a certain degree, they also empower the authorities to use citizenship the way they wish. For example, as mentioned in chapter 5, the Citizenship Act of 1963 states that citizenship is granted by descent or after an individual has satisfied requirements of certain years of residency and language fluency. However, the Act also states that citizenship can be granted to anyone “by order of His Majesty the Governor,” i.e. the king. In this way, thousands have been naturalised in Bahrain, many whom are recruited to the security services, without necessary satisfying the residency and language requirements in the law. Similarly, the laws regulate under which circumstances citizenship can be revoked. It includes in case of treason (constitution, article 17), or when one “causes damage to the interest of the state” (Citizenship Act, article 10c) or engage in terrorism acts (anti-terrorism legislation). Hundreds, many of whom are political activists, have been stripped of their citizenship based on these regulations, which are criticized for being vague and being used in practice to punish dissidents.

The instances of naturalisation and denaturalisation show that the gift of citizenship is distributed based on the criterion of loyalty. Citizenship and other means of empowerment, e.g. scholarship and (high-ranking) jobs, are granted to those the government trusts will be loyal in exchange. Foreigners are hired from abroad and granted citizenship in (an advanced) reward for loyalty. The authorities perhaps believe that foreigners are easier to control than the native population, which from time to another has mobilised against the government – most recently in the 2011-uprising. The last years’ development signifies a deepening mistrust towards citizens. This is illustrated in the introduction of “politicalized” interviews for

scholarship applicants and expanded restrictions in employment. As described in chapter 4, scholarship applicants are asked about their loyalty to the ruling family in the interviews. Those who had allegedly participated in the protests – or had treated wounded protestors such as doctors and nurses – were fired from their jobs or later forced to retire. A great portion of nurse graduates is left unemployed, probably because workers from the health sector played a significant role during the uprising. In this way, the rulers' deepening mistrust after the 2011-uprising contribute to crush citizens' aspirations for education and employment, or, at worst, deprives them of all their rights and makes them stateless.

These incidents and examples illustrate how citizenship is used as a mechanism of reward, on the one hand, and as a punishment, on the other. The Bahraini government has adopted a carrot and stick approach to its citizenship policies. Despite calls of greater rights from the citizenry, who perceive citizenship as a right itself – in accordance with international law – the authorities present another understanding of citizenship. Citizenship as a gift implies that it is up to the authorities to determine whom “deserve” inclusion and further privileges, and who do not deserve one or both of these “rewards.” By giving such rewards, the ruler aim to secure the loyalty of citizens. For example, the revenues from oil and other natural resources are believed to have this function; that is, to benefit citizens so they refrain from demanding political rights (Butenschøn 2017: 247-248).²¹ However, the uneven distribution of such revenues in Bahrain is precisely causing people's dissatisfaction and, accordingly, motivating them to speak out and demand their rights. According to Gengler (2015: 5), “the material benefits ... are not distributed in a politically agnostic manner, but aim primarily to reward supporters rather than convert opponents.”²² Although there have been promises of reforms, these promises are to this date predominantly considered as unfulfilled, including those introduced by the king in the early 2000s and after the BICI report in 2011 (Issa 2014; ADHRB 2017).

However, the regime is not alone in having a mistrust issue with citizens. The mistrust is truly mutual. It is embodied in long-running discrimination, repeated broken promises of political reforms, and the occurrence of several social movements throughout Bahrain's history. The mutual mistrust is, for example, hindering the government's efforts of hiring members from

²¹ This is the assumption of rentier state theory, which in this thesis is not specifically addressed because the focus is instead on describing the politics of citizenship.

²² Based on this, Gengler (2015) argues that the rentier state in Bahrain has failed.

the Shia community as police officers, as reported by US State Department (2016: 7). Moreover, more Shia Bahrainis are arguably seeking jobs abroad as a consequence of lack of trust and perhaps own experience of restricted opportunities (Kinninmont 2012: 10). In addition, an increasing number of citizens have fled the country in recent years in fear of reprisals, including three of whom I interviewed. These trends may indicate that the state's treatment of citizenship as a gift has resulted in its own legitimacy crisis. A great portion of the citizenry – particularly those who are excluded from enjoying the “gift” of citizenship or have restrictions thereof – does not trust the government nor perceives it as legitimate (Kinninmont 2012: 1).

6.3 Sectarianism and other Rationales

In news reports about Bahrain, the most frequent explanation of instability is probably the religious divide between Sunni and Shia. The government-opposition conflict is often portrayed in terms of a Sunni monarchy against a Shia majority population. The sectarian divisions play without a doubt a role in Bahraini politics, in which the government (and perhaps some of the citizens) look at the other party through a sectarian lens. As this thesis has shown, Shias are being targeted as a group in several ways. The attacks on Shia places of worship in 2011 and the restrictions on Shia rituals, including the Friday prayers and the Shia performance of the religious days of Ashura, serve as examples. The same is exemplified in the school curricula, which not only fail to teach students about the religious beliefs of the Shia majority, but also denounce some of these beliefs and practices as “blasphemous,” for example the Shias' use of stone or a piece of clay during prayer. “Shias are clearly being targeted on the basis of their religion,” as noted by several UN rights experts in 2016. The experts mentioned the revocations of citizenship of many Shias, including the senior Shia cleric Sheikh Isa Qassim, as an example of “The systematic harassment of the Shia population by the authorities in Bahrain” (UN OHCHR 2016). Some note that Bahrain – along with Saudi Arabia – “is the most often-cited example of state-sponsored anti-Shiism throughout history” (Louër 2013: 118). Others argue, “The most critical sectarian conflict in the Persian Gulf at present is in Bahrain” (Potter 2013: 28).

However, the significance of state-sponsored sectarianism targeting the Shia majority must not overshadow other possible rationales behind the current policies in Bahrain. One of them is the perception of Shias as a security problem – a rationale which, in fact, overlaps with the sectarian motive. This perceived security threat is to a large extent caused by the regional setting. Since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the suspicion of Bahraini Shias has reportedly become more severe. They have repeatedly been accused of working as agents of Iran with the aim of establishing a Shia government in Bahrain. This accusation was, for example, present in pro-governmental media during the 2011-uprising (Gengler 2013: 68-74; Diwan 2013: 162-165). As recent as March 2017, the Ministry of Interior (2017) claimed it has caught a terrorist group with links to Iran and the Iraqi branch of Hezbollah. Similar claims have been brought occasionally since 1981; also then, a group of Bahraini exiles from Iran was caught in Dubai airport, accused of planning a coup in Bahrain (Louër 2013: 124). The credibility of such claims has been criticised, in particular the allegation of Iran's involvement in the 2011-uprising (Kinninmont 2012: 20-22; Louër 2012: 95). However, in light of the geopolitical rivalries in the region – predominantly between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which themselves overlaps with the sectarian divide – the Bahraini government seems to precautionary suppose that Shias cannot be trusted. Lack of trust justifies the differentiation policies – that some do not “deserve” the benefits of citizenship, as mentioned above. This can explain why measures were taken in the 1980s to dismiss Shia employees in the Bahraini military, including the uncle of one of those I interviewed (see page 36 in this thesis), and the almost total exclusion of Shias in the security sector since then. In this way, Shias are collectively left worse off based on fear of Iranian ties and transnational Shiism.

Besides the sectarian rationale and the perceived need to suppress a security threat from an allegedly foreign-backed Shia movement, the policies of differentiation in Bahrain may be a product of a historical rivalry between the conqueror and the conquered; the former is the Al-Khalifa ruling family, while the latter is predominantly the Shia population. This can explain the different narratives of national history highlighted by each party, in which the government's view is propagandised in the school curricula and historical sites presented to tourists. As examined in chapter 4, these sources focus on Al-Khalifa's subjection of Bahrain in 1783 and the following development under their reign. The longer presence of Shia Bahrainis in the territory – which reflects their indigenous character – is ignored. Some signs of Shia heritage are furthermore totally destructed or erased. This was the case of historical

mosques which were demolished in 2011 and the more than 1000 years old Al-Khamis mosque which has been erased from its Shia references. While these trends may have a sectarian rationale, the overlapping cleavages of the conqueror/conquered and the alien/native are probably also of relevance (Louër 2013: 120).

6.4 Authoritarianism

Bahraini authorities have different rationales behind their selection of who deserves citizenship and inclusion in the society, and who are eligible to neither the one nor the other. However, the selection premises and the resulting differentiation policies have altogether arguably one ultimate goal: to maintain the power of rulers. Overall, the politics of citizenship – which I have sought to study in this thesis – covers arenas of “social interaction where citizenship comes into the picture as a mechanism of *power distribution*” (Butenschøn 2000: 6, my emphasis). In Bahrain, the mechanism of citizenship is predominantly in the hands of the government, which is capable to (non-)distribute power so the outcome serves the rulers’ interests. The government controls the state resources and institutions which are necessary to secure its survival – at least for the time being. As an authoritarian state, Bahrain’s rulers are able to employ repressive means in order to maintain power without proper fear of accountability or to be pushed out of office.

Bahrain has admittedly a constitution and other laws which are supposed to give citizens a sense of rule of law. The extracts from the laws, which were presented in the foregoing chapters, illustrate this point. However, neither the laws nor elections secure accountability. In some cases, the laws themselves empower the authorities to crush dissidents. This was demonstrated in the assessment of the legislation which regulate citizenship revocations, including the anti-terrorism law which put detained terror suspects at high risk of torture (see page 62-63 in this thesis). As presented in the introductory chapter, the king has the supreme power and authority, even over what is supposed to be a partly elected legislative and an independent judiciary. For that reason, Bahrain is called a constitutional autocracy (Rose 2009: 17). At the end, the objective of state polices is to secure the absolute power in the hands of the ruler and his royal family who occupy most high-ranking positions in the state.

The crucial factor is thus to shed light on how differentiated citizenship, sectarianism and so on are employed in order to maintain the power of the ruling Al-Khalifa monarchy. The use of the divide and rule strategy has been noted in this regard (Moore-Gilbert 2016; Wehrey 2014: 4). By co-opting some groups in society and marginalizing others, the government deliberately make divisions between citizens. The resulting divisions are of social, economic, and political character. This is evident in the distribution of government jobs and scholarships to one group while restricting the access to the same to the other group. As described earlier, these divisions are made along the sectarian dimension. While native and foreign Sunnis are included in the society and provided with opportunities, members of the native Shia community are deprived of similar rights. While such discrimination affects the marginalized group's relationship with the state, it has also an impact on citizen-citizen relations. The inequality may result in trust deficit and conflict between citizens (Moore-Gilbert 2016: 164). The latter can be caused by state-sponsored enemy images. For example, Sunnis might perceive Shias as agents for foreign actors, who want to overthrow the Sunni regime in exchange of a Shia government. On the other hand, the Shias might have a perception that members of the Sunni group are on par with the oppressive regime.

The divide and rule approach underlines the fact that under the presence of divisions which set people apart, often based on enemy images, the beneficiary tend to be the ruler. People are set apart when they are provided with different rights and opportunities, for example, in education and employment. Each group ends in a different social stratum in a hierarchy of differentiated citizenship. People who do not interact because they are separated, or who are not willing to interact because of mistrust, will not be able to construct a joint force which can seriously challenge the power of the ruler. It is in this sense that the Bahraini government has invested in a divide and rule approach based on sectarianism. The propaganda of Shias as traitors, who aim to establish a Shia government in Bahrain, promotes the view of the regime as a protector of Sunni interests. It manipulates the Sunni minority to seek regime protection from what is supposedly waiting them in case of regime change: Shia domination and Sunni degradation (Moore-Gilbert 2016: 174-175). In this respect, the authorities' justification of "maintaining security and order" – which enable them to differentiate and repress – should be understood synonymous with their own power maintenance.

Admittedly, the authoritarian strategy of sectarian-based divide and rule has *not* segregated Sunnis and Shias totally. The authorities' propaganda has not succeeded to convince all Sunnis that Shias are traitors, nor convince Shias that all Sunnis accept the current differentiation policies. Cross-sectarian alliances are still present in the country, even though they are few and have perhaps declined in the last years. Throughout Bahrain's history, cross-sectarian alliances demanded from the government the incorporation of citizens in political decision-making. The 2011-uprising is one instance where cross-sectarian solidarity was evident. However, such alliances have as a rule been suppressed (Moore-Gilbert 2016: 168-176; Matthiesen 2013: 10-13). The secular Waad political society may be the best example of a present co-existence between Sunnis and Shias within a corporate organisation, led by a Sunni opposition figure: Ibrahim Sharif. Waad itself risks to be forcibly dissolved in an ongoing trial (as of April 2017) on charges of "incitement of acts of terrorism and promoting violent and forceful overthrow of the political regime" (BNA 2017). Other parties such as Al-Wefaq have already faced forced dissolution based on similar charges. Although Al-Wefaq is predominantly Shia, it has cooperated with Waad on several issues. For example, in October 2011, they published a joint political document with three other associations. The so-called "Manama Document" expressed their shared political visions, including demands of a fully elected legislature, an elected government, and an independent judiciary. However, these goals seem now abstract in light of the de-legalization of oppositional political societies. The de-legalization of these groups is a further attempt by the rulers in Bahrain to crush oppositional groups that are willing to cooperate across sectarian lines.

Nevertheless, the authorities present another view on what in this thesis have been called means of discrimination and repression. They claim they are taking security measures to cope with disobedient citizens. For example, this was used as a justification for the reported attacks by security forces on Shia performance of religious rites. The same goes for revoking the citizenship of Bahrainis, who the authorities say are harming the state's interests, including by engaging in terror acts. The latter accusation is probably true in some cases, for example with regard to those who have fled the country to join ISIS; but, in most cases, it tends to be false and used to justify reprisals against political activists and as a collective harassment of Shia citizens. In fact, mixing names of ISIS suspects with names of peaceful activists have been criticized for being deliberately aimed by the authorities in order to cover for the arbitrary target of the latter group. The authorities, on the other hand, stress that citizens' rights are

constitutionally protected, including the right to freedom of religion. They highlight the progress made in fields such as education, in which many more has access to educational services compared with the situation just one generation back. While both of the latter two elements should not be overlooked, neither should the facts of violations of constitutional rights and the disproportional distribution of state benefits to citizens.

The government furthermore stresses its commitment to reform, including by accepting the report by the BICI, which the government itself initiated but officially made independent. It pledged to implement the 26 BICI recommendations following revelations of grave abuses in March and April 2011. This included to re-employ workers who were dismissed in 2011 and reconstruct mosques which were demolished the same year. These two along with the rest of the recommendations are today fully implemented, according to the Bahraini government (2017 UPR National Report). However, human rights groups reject this claim. They state the fact that the government has to this date failed to fulfil the majority of the promised reforms. Some have been partially fulfilled, including the two above-mentioned examples. The chairman of the BICI, Professor Cherif Bassiouni, himself noted that the recommendations are “implemented on a piecemeal basis” (Issa 2014; ADHRB 2017). These broken promises are added to the government-initiated calls of national dialogues with the opposition, which over and over again are perceived as offering no more than empty words (Kinninmont 2012: 4-5). In the absence of a legal opposition, following imprisonment of politicians and dissolution of political parties, the regime can hardly claim any meaningful dialogue capable to solve the current crises and mistrust between citizens and the state. Continuing in the repressive path, the regime instead shows its commitment to authoritarianism – letting its goal of power maintenance trumps any other ends.

6.5 From Citizen to Non-Existent

Bahrain’s politics of citizenship has resulted in the differentiation between citizens and the fragmentation of society into a hierarchy of citizen statuses. In the one end, there is the privileged citizen. In the other, there is the former citizen who is no longer recognised as a citizen. The marginalized citizen is located between these two ends. Those who are privileged are honoured with great access to government jobs and educational services, which in turn are

deprived of others. The marginalized groups are those who are subjected to restricted opportunities in obtaining scholarship, employment and promotion in the work place, and so on – even if they are qualified to obtain these services and rights. Data proves the fact that Sunni Bahrainis and Sunni recruits from abroad enjoy privileges, which are withdrawn from Shia citizens. The socially out-group tends to be the latter, who are on a collective basis exposed to marginalization by the state. This includes restrictions on religious freedom and cultural rights, for example the state-sponsored erase of Shia heritage in historical significant places of worship. At worst, members of the Shia community are totally excluded from citizenship rights through the instrument of citizenship revocation. The inferiority of Shia thus feature prominently in the differentiated citizenship regime in Bahrain.

The foregoing is meant as a generalized portrait of the stance of differentiated citizenship in Bahrain. It is based on the specific but wide-ranging findings of the current study, which focused most of all on the sectarian-based systematic discrimination against Shia citizens and on the degradation of political dissidents. However, there are probably other grounds of differentiation such as gender and migrant status, which have not been dealt with in this thesis. Likewise, there are certainly degrees of marginalization, in which for example Shias with Persian origin perhaps are more subjected to discrimination than those with Arab origin. Also, as was briefly mentioned, higher education can to a certain degree minimize the occurrence of differentiation. The objective was not to give a comprehensive description of the composition of the citizenship hierarchy according to all these dimensions (gender, migrant status, ethnic background, education, etcetera), although some of them were briefly mentioned. The thesis instead ought to present a comprehensive account on the *presence* of differentiated citizenship in Bahrain based on the sectarian and political dimensions.

The thesis demonstrates the severe implications of differentiated citizenship for individuals subjected to degradation and exclusion. While all marginalized people enjoy a precarious existence, in which the government's iron hand can spoil their lives anytime, the conditions are worst for those who have their citizenship revoked and end up stateless. They are often deprived of basic rights, such as holding identification papers. As paperless, they do not exist in the state system. They cannot enrol in public education; work; own real estate; access public health care; nor obtain social benefits. Furthermore, they face issues concerning the right to residency and freedom of movement, and are threatened with expulsion from Bahrain.

They can simply not pursue their daily existence without interference and difficulties. This has also implications for newborn children, who are not entailed to the Bahraini citizenship because their father is no longer a Bahraini citizen. All these problems are a result of the authorities' politics of citizenship, which make some people worse off than others and even deprive them of the right of being 'citizens' in their own home country.

Some denote the existence as stateless as simply 'non-existence.' Others stress that it is a 'civil execution' of an individual. These denotations come from individuals who themselves are victims of Bahrain's politics of citizenship revocations, whom I interviewed. By taking away citizenship, the state leaves individuals with a status of non-existence in their own country, they emphasized. It is like the state executed them of their civil rights. For some stateless individuals, however, the authorities also took their lives. The three death sentences implemented in January 2017 narrate a tragic story. Although based on torture and unfair trials, as one of the defendants proclaimed in leaked videos from prison and documented by human rights groups, the executions were carried out on each of Ali Al-Singace (21), Abbas Al-Samea (27) and Sami Mushaima (42). They are not only de jure non-existents, but also de facto. This illustrates the severity of the current citizenship policies in Bahrain, which can strike individuals from being a citizen to a non-existent.

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